



Leon Trotsky on THE RISE OF HITLER AND DESTRUCTION OF THE GERMAN LEFT

Though expelled from the USSR, Trotsky and the Left Opposition still considered themselves a faction of the Communist International. Until Hitler came to power, they tried to influence the Comintern and the German reds, to return them to the Leninist precepts of internationalism and internal democracy.

They did not (yet) support the rise of a Fourth International. It was these events in Germany, and the failure of the German Communist Party and the Communist International that lead to Trotsky's call for a

new, "Fourth" Communist International. We include one 1940 article on the nature of Fascism that Trotsky was working on the time he was murdered by a Stalinist agent. The rest of this collection deals specifically with the rise of the Nazis in the early 1930s.

In the following collection of Trotsky's letters and articles, he is specifically addressing the German Communist Party, which he considered the only realistic organization to stop fascism. His goal was for them to break with Comintern policy, not the Comintern itself. These series of articles and essays, however, show Trotsky's method in his ultimate break with the Comintern.

We've also include a chronology of events beginning with the rise of the workers movement at the end of World War I and statistics on the various elections that the Communist Party participated in.

This page was originally compiled by the Zodiac. The page has been reformatted to conform with the [Trotsky Internet Archive](#). Several additional articles, previously un-transcribed have been contributed by the [TIA's director](#) and other TIA volunteers.

1918: German revolution dies, due in large part to the **Social Democratic Party (SPD)**. The **SPD** belongs to the old Second International. Before the war, it had never held power, only opposition. Class cooperationists, the **SPD** supported the war. In working to prevent a successful Red revolution, the **SPD** allies with capitalists and the army, even cooperating with right-wing "Freikorps", thereby helping train early cadres of the future National Socialist Party (**Nazis**).

Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht are both executed by the state. Russian Bolsheviks had counted on

a successful German revolution for the survival of their own revolution.

1919: German monarchy folds, the **Weimar Republic** is born. The Weimar constitution is a standard "social democrat"-style arrangement: workers are granted several "social safety net" programs, while the capitalists (and army) retain with full powers, which they more or less "promise" to never abuse. The first Weimar cabinet is headed by the **SPD**, and their Chancellor Philipp Scheidemann, in coalition with two capitalist parties, the **Catholic Center Party** and the **German Democratic Party**. (NOTE: In the 1919 Reichstag elections, 45 percent of voters support parties which label themselves Marxist.)

1921: All revolutionary opportunity has passed. The Third International (Communist International, or Comintern) initiates a "united front" strategy as a way of strengthening Communist parties in nations where Social Democrats dominated -- rather like Germany.

1922: German government is crippled by, and unable to meet, war reparations specified by the Treaty of Versailles.

1923 January: French government sends troops to occupy the Ruhr. Inflation soars, the working class launches massive strikes, the middle class has savings wiped out. It's an extreme crisis and the government is helpless. **KPD** membership swells and new ultra-right movements (like the **Nazis**) grow. But **KPD** leadership, guided by the Comintern, misses the opportunity. By 1924, events stabilize (with some American aid).

1924 May: [Reichstag elections](#) see "Marxist" parties drop to to 33 per cent of the electorate; Nazi strength declines even more drastically.

1924 December: Another round of [Reichstag elections](#) sees **SPD** support grow and **KPD** drop.

1925: [Presidential election](#). Monarchist general Hindenburg elected president in runoff election against Wilhelm Marx, member of the **Catholic Center Party** -- the latter being supported by the **SPD** and the liberal capitalist parties -- and Ernst Thaelmann of the **KPD**.

1925-29: Weimar Republic's stable period. **SPD** remains Germany's largest party with powerful support from the working class. No realistic plan for a German social revolution can be constructed without intelligent consideration of the **SPD**.

Meanwhile, in the USSR, the "Left Opposition" is defeated by Stalinists. In 1927, Trotsky is expelled from the Soviet Communist Party. In 1928, he's deported to Siberia. In 1929, he's exiled to Turkey. Stalinists purge more than just Left Opposition. By 1930, the Communist International and affiliated parties are merely bureaucratic extensions of Soviet foreign policy. The leaders of the **KPD** are appointees of the Kremlin.

1928 May: [Reichstag elections](#) return the **SPD** to cabinet with Chancellor Hermann Mueller. **KPD** get a third of the **SPD**'s vote (**Nazis** get less than a tenth). This **SPD** leadership is further right than before and opts for something called the **Great Coalition** -- including the **People's Party** -- and holds power for about two years.

Meanwhile, the Comintern adopts the ultra-left doctrine of the **Third Period** and something called **social fascism**. The doctrine says the collapse of the world's capitalist nations is supposedly following a handy pattern:

- The First Period (1917-1924): Capitalist crisis and revolutionary upsurge;
- The Second Period (1925-1928): Capitalist stability;
- The Third Period (now): Capitalist crises return and proles are ready to rise up again.

The Comintern concludes it's time to end Second Period collaboration with Social Democrats (and their powerful working class base). In the case of Germany, it means these **SPD** workers are really just "social fascists," a sort of left wing of fascism.

1929 Fall: The Great Depression, death knell of Weimar. German unemployment hits 3 million. The already fragile German economy collapses. The populace is radicalized. **KPD** membership grows, despite alienation from **SPD**-led unions. The fascists likewise grow, now even attracting financial support from *big capitalists*. And the **storm troops** (Sturm Abteilung or SA) hits 100,000 by year's end.

1930 March: the **SPD** Mueller cabinet resigns. Never again will Weimar see a majority government. President Hindenburg appoints Heinrich Bruening of the **Center Party** as Chancellor. Bruening tries to establish a more right wing government but fails to get sufficient support in the Reichstag.

Bruening cites Paragraph 48 of the Weimar Constitution and claims to now rule by "emergency decree." The Social Democrats helped construct that paragraph, never imagining they'd be the target of it.

1930 July: Bruening's emergency decrees on budget are overruled by **SPD**, **KPD**, and Nazi deputies. Hindenburg dissolves the Reichstag and calls for new elections.

1930 September 14: [Election day](#). **SPD** votes tumble by 6 percent, while the **KPD** rises by 40 percent. However, their combined vote falls from 40.4 per cent of electorate to 37.6. The real change is the Nazi vote -- up 700 per cent. The **Nazis** go from ninth to second-largest party. Meanwhile, the Comintern-led **KPD** dubs this a victory for the Communists and "the beginning of the end" for the **Nazis**. The Comintern concurs.

Trotsky's opinion was slightly different. To paraphrase him, the **KPD** is like a singer who sings wedding songs at funerals, and funeral songs at weddings... and is soundly thrashed at each occasion.

TROTSKY'S WORKS ON THIS PERIOD:

- **1930 Sep 26:** [The Turn in the Communist International and the Situation in Germany](#)
- **1931 Apr 14:** [Thaelmann and the "People's Revolution"](#)
- **1931 Aug 20:** [Workers' Control of Production](#)
- **1931 Sep 12:** [Factory Councils and Workers' Control of Production](#)

1930 October 18: Shaken by the Nazi electoral triumph, the **SPD** decides to back Bruening's government. With **SPD** support, Bruening remains Chancellor another 26 months. It is an unpopular rule that only benefits the **Nazis**. Big business support of Hitler continually increases. The SA is emboldened in attacks on working-class radicals.

Stymied by the **SPD**-Bruening block, the **Nazis** focus on gaining control of Prussia's Landtag (state

legislature). Prussia is the largest state in Germany, with over two-thirds of the population. It's a Social Democratic stronghold. The **Nazis**, right-wing Nationalists and the Stahlheim (a counterrevolutionary veterans' organization), invoke a clause in the Weimar Constitution to launch a referendum to oust the Prussian **SPD**-coalition government. **KPD** opposes the referendum.

1931: Over 4 million unemployed.

1931 July 21: **KPD** leaders present ultimatum to **KPD** coalition leaders in Prussia: make a united front with us or we'll back the **Nazis**. **SPD** leaders reject it. The **KPD** backs the **Nazis**, despite the fact it might put the **Nazis** in power -- though now the **KPD** calls it the "Red referendum". **Nazis** and German Communists campaign together to remove Prussia's **SPD**-led government.

1931 August 9: Prussian Referendum fails. **SPD** stays in control.

1931 September: **SPD** leaders expel Reichstag deputies Max Seydewitz and Kurt Rosenfeld for open opposition to **SPD** support of Bruening regime. The expelled deputies favor a united front against fascists.

1931 October: More **SPD** expulsions/resignations. **SPD** splits. Left Social Democrats unite with **SPD** youth, pacifists, and some of the **Brandlerite Communist Party Opposition** (KPO) to form the **Socialist Workers Party** (SAP). Six SAP leaders are deputies in the Reichstag.

Trotsky takes a positive attitude toward new group, hoping that its members will overcome **SPD** centrism. But SAP is a confused body with no real impact on working-class politics. (In July 1932 elections, SAP gets merely 72,630 votes and lose all six Reichstag seats. In the November 1932 election, their vote drops further still. **SPD** rank and file can not be dislodged from their party that easily. So rather than destroy the **SPD** in this time of crisis, one should work to save it.)

1931 December: **SPD** leaders create the **Iron Front for Resistance Against Fascism**. The organization seeks to engage the old Reichsbanner, the **SPD** youth, and labor and liberal groups. **SPD** rallies to the Iron Front, holds mass demonstrations, fights fascists in the streets, and arms selves. This is more than the **SPD** leaders wanted. But **SPD** workers don't care and grow increasingly revolutionary. Meanwhile, the **KPD** has no ideological concept of a united front -- hell, they just supported the **Nazis** in the "Red referendum."

TROTSKY'S WORKS ON THIS PERIOD:

- 1931 Aug 25: [Against National Communism! \(Lessons of the "Red Referendum"\)](#)
- 1931 Nov 26: [Germany, the Key to the International Situation](#)
- 1931 Dec 08: [For a Workers' United Front Against Fascism](#)
- 1932 Jan 27: [What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat](#)

1932: Economic crisis deepens. Unemployed: 5 mil. "Social Democratic" state further dismantled.

1932 March 13: [Presidential election](#). Three main candidates: Hindenburg, Hitler, and Thaelmann. But the Nationalists also push Stahlheim leader Theodor Duesterberg -- who merely steals votes from Hitler. Last Presidential election, the **SPD** opposed Hindenburg. Now they support him over Hitler. The Iron

Front becomes an electoral machine for the monarchist militarist.

1932 April 10: [Runoff Presidential election](#) held since no clear majority was established. Duesterberg withdraws so Nationalists can campaign for Hitler. Hindenburg wins, but Nazi vote has doubled in 17 months. Nonetheless, the **SPD** hails Hindenburg's election as a triumph over fascism.

1932 April 14: Bruening has Hindenburg sign a decree outlawing Nazi SA and SS. Bruening thinks this curbs Hitler's growth. Instead, it will prove to be Bruening's fall.

1932 May 31: Hindenburg demands Chancellor Bruening resign. Hindenburg picks Franz von Papen of the **Centre** party as new Chancellor. The **Center** party expels von Papen. He is basically Hindenburg's puppet, without any support in the Reichstag.

1932 June 4: Papen dissolves the Reichstag and calls for new elections.

1932 June 15: Papen rescinds the ban on Nazi private armies. Wave of violence results. Hundreds dead/wounded. Papen bans political parades in fortnight before July 31 elections.

1932 July 17: **Nazis** march, under police escort, through working class Hamburg. Result: 19 dead, 285 wounded.

1932 July 20: Citing the Hamburg battle, Papen claims the Prussian government can't maintain "law and order." He deposes the Social Democrats and appoints himself Reich Commissioner for Prussia.

The **SPD** once swore to defend the republic against any coup d'etat, from the right or the left. German workers wait for a call to action. The **SPD** promise to appeal Papen's coup to the courts. Nothing else happens.

The **KPD** calls for a general strike. Of course, the **KPD's** great "Red referendum" is used to ridicule it.

1932 July 31: [Reichstag elections](#). **Nazis** are now Germany's largest party.

1932 September 12: New Reichstag convenes. Papen thinks he can manipulate the **Nazis**, but they realize they don't need him. **Nazis** support the Reichstag vote to censure the Hindenburg-imposed Papen regime (vote of 513 to 32). The Reichstag is dissolved and new elections called for November 6.

TROTSKY'S WORKS ON THIS PERIOD:

- 1932 May 12: [Interview with Montag Morgen](#)
- 1932 Aug: [The German Puzzle](#)
- 1932 Sep 14: [The Only Road](#)
- 1932 Oct 30: [German Bonapartism](#)

1932 November 6: [Reichstag election](#). Nazi faithful have begun to tire of Hitler's political maneuvers to gain power carefully. Morale drops. In the election, **Nazis** lose two million votes. Critically: *total Nazi vote is now less than the combined SPD-KPD vote*. But this is lost on the Comintern and **KPD**. This would turn out to be the last "free" election of Weimar Germany -- and the **Nazis** failed to get their majority.

1932 November 17: Papen and cabinet resigns.

1932 December 2: Hindenburg appoints "social general" Schleicher Chancellor. Schleicher tries split left (trade-union bureaucrats break with the **SPD**) and right (dissident "left **Nazis**" under Gregor Strasser break with Hitler).

1933 January 30: Hindenburg appoints Hitler as Chancellor. Papen is Vice-Chancellor. Hitler agrees to take only three of 11 cabinet posts. Trotsky expects worker parties will resist Hitler and mobilize. **SPD** leaders say "Hitler's appointment" is constitutional and forbid worker actions that might upset the **Nazis**. The **KPD**, on the other hand, is still denouncing the **SPD**.

1933 March 5: Hitler gets Hindenburg to dissolve parliament. In the run-up to new election, **KPD** meetings are banned. **KPD** press are shut down. **Nazis** finally take control of Prussia and its nationwide police force and flooded it with storm troopers. The terror begins.

TROTSKY'S WORKS ON THIS PERIOD:

- **1933 Feb 5:** [Before the Decision](#)
 - **1933 Feb 23:** [The United Front for Defense: A Letter to a Social Democratic Worker](#)
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1933 February 27: **Nazis** start fire in the Reichstag and blame it on Communists.

1933 February 28: President Hindenburg suspends Constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression, press, assembly, association. Thousands of **KPD** and **SPD** officials are arrested. Only the **Nazis** and Nationalists are permitted to campaign in the last week before the election.

1933 March 5: [Reichstag elections](#). Even with all this "constitutional" oppression, the **Nazis** still couldn't get a majority. But it was still game over. **KPD** calls for national strikes.

1933 March 23: Citing the Constitution, Hitler asks new Reichstag to grant him dictatorial power. This requires a two-thirds Reichstag vote. As **KPD** deputies are jailed or leaving the country, Hitler's demand is granted (441 to 84). Liberal and conservative parties vote for it. Only the remaining Social Democrats vote against it.

1933 April 7: Stalinists Comintern deludes itself about an expected proletarian revolution soon to follow Hitler's victory. While it dreams, the **KPD** is annihilated.

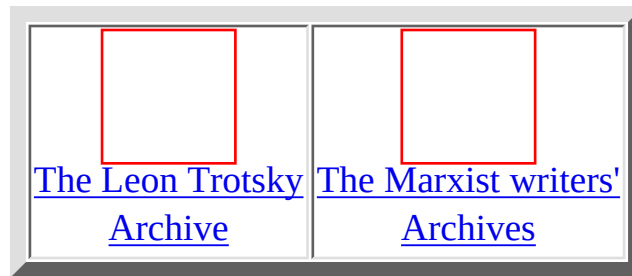
1933 May 1: May Day. The remaining **SPD** is a different beast than Frederick Engels had known. This creature supports Hitler's various labor "reorganizations" and encourages workers to march in the Nazi "National Day of Labor" parade May 1.

1933 May 2: **Nazis** take over the trade-union movement and send labor leaders to concentration camps.

TROTSKY'S WORKS ON THIS PERIOD:

- **1933 March 14:** [The Tragedy of the German Proletariat:](#) The German Workers Will Rise Again -- Stalinism, Never!
- **1933 Mar 17:** [Germany and the USSR](#)

- 1933 Mar 21: [Hitler and the Red Army](#)
 - 1933 May 28: [The German Catastrophe: The Responsibility of the Leadership](#)
 - 1933 Jun 10: [What Is National Socialism?](#)
 - 1933 Jun 22: [How Long Can Hitler Stay?](#)
 - 1933 Jul 15: [It Is Necessary to Build Communist Parties and an International Anew](#)
 - 1933 Jul 20: [It Is Impossible to Remain in the Same International with the Stalins, Manuiskys, Lozovskys & Co.](#)
 - 1934 Jul 15: **Bonapartism and Fascism** (not transcribed)
 - 1940 Aug 20: [Bonapartism, Fascism, and War](#)
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ELECTION RESULTS IN GERMANY 1924-1933

REICHSTAG ELECTION MAY 1924

Party	vote	%
Social Democratic	6,008,900	20.5
Nationalist	5,696,500	19.5
Center	3,914,400	13.4
Communist	3,693,300	12.6
People's	2,694,400	9.2
National Socialist	1,918,300	6.5
Democratic (State)	1,655,100	5.7
Bavarian People's	946,700	3.2
Economic	693,600	2.4
Other parties	2,060,600	6.9

REICHSTAG ELECTION DECEMBER 1924

Party	vote	%
Social Democratic	7,881,000	26.0
Nationalist	6,205,800	20.5
Center	4,118,900	13.6
People's	3,049,100	10.1
Communist	2,709,100	9.0
Democratic (State)	1,919,800	6.3
Bavarian People's	1,134,000	3.7
Economic	1,005,400	3.3
National Socialist	907,300	3.0
Other parties	1,359,700	4.4

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 1925

Candidate	vote
Hindenburg	14,655,000
Marx	13,751,000
Thaelmann	1,931,000

REICHSTAG ELECTION MAY 1928

Party	vote	%
Social Democratic	9,153,000	29.8
Nationalist	4,381,600	14.2
Center	3,712,200	12.1
Communist	3,264,800	10.6
People's	2,679,700	8.7
Democratic (State)	1,505,700	4.9
Economic	1,397,100	4.5
Bavarian People's	945,600	3.0
National Socialist	810,100	2.6
Landvolk	581,800	1.8
Other parties	2,321,700	7.5

REICHSTAG ELECTION SEPTEMBER 1930

Party	vote	%
Social Democratic	8,577,700	24.5
National Socialist	6,409,600	18.3
Communist	4,592,100	13.1
Center	4,127,900	11.8
People's	1,578,200	4.5
Nationalist	2,458,300	7.0
Economic	1,362,400	3.9
Democratic (State)	1,322,400	3.8
Landvolk	1,108,700	3.0

Bavarian People's	1,059,100	3.0
Other parties	2,619,600	7.5

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION MARCH 1932

Candidate	vote	%
Hindenburg	18,651,500	49.6
Hitler	11,339,400	30.1
Thaelmann	4,983,300	13.2
Duesterberg	2,557,700	6.8

RUNOFF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION APRIL 1932

Candidate	vote	%
Hindenburg	19,360,000	53.0
Hitler	13,418,500	36.8
Thaelman	3,706,800	10.2

REICHSTAG ELECTION JULY 31 1932

Party	vote	%
National Socialist	13,745,800	37.4
Social Democratic	7,959,700	21.6
Communist	5,282,600	14.6
Center	4,589,300	12.5
Nationalist	2,177,400	5.9
Bavarian People's	1,192,700	3.2
Other parties	2,074,000	5.4

REICHSTAG ELECTION NOVEMBER 6 1932

Party	vote	%
National Socialist	11,737,000	33.1
Social Democratic	7,248,000	20.4
Communist	5,980,000	16.9
Center	4,231,000	11.9
Nationalist	2,959,000	8.8
Bavarian People's	1,095,000	3.1
Other parties	2,635,000	7.6

REICHSTAG ELECTION MARCH 1933

Party	vote	%
National Socialist	17,277,000	43.9
Social Democratic	7,182,000	18.3
Communist	4,848,000	12.3
Center	4,425,000	11.7
Nationalist	3,137,000	8.0
Bavarian People's	1,074,000	2.7
Other parties	1,533,000	3.8



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Leon Trotsky

THE TURN IN THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL AND THE SITUATION IN GERMANY

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1. THE SOURCES OF THE LATEST TURN

Tactical turns, even wide ones, are absolutely unavoidable in our epoch. They are necessitated by the abrupt turns of the objective situation (a lack of stable international relations; sharp and irregular fluctuations of conjuncture; sharp reflections of the economic fluctuations in politics; the impulsiveness of the masses under the influence of a feeling of helplessness, etc., etc.). Careful observation of the changes in the objective situation is now a far more important and at the same time immeasurably more difficult task than it was before the war, in the epoch of the "organic" development of capitalism. The leadership of the party now finds itself in the position of someone who drives his automobile on a mountain, over the sharp zigzags of the road. An untimely turn, incorrectly applied speed, threaten the passengers and the car with the greatest danger, if not with destruction.

The leadership of the Communist International [1] in recent years has given us examples of very abrupt turns. The latest of them we have observed in the last months. What has called forth the turns of the Communist International since the death of Lenin? The changes in the objective situation? No. It can be said with confidence: beginning with 1923, not a single tactical turn was made in time, under the influence of correctly estimated changes in the objective conditions, by the Comintern. On the contrary: every turn was the result of the unbearable sharpening of the contradictions between the line of the Comintern and the objective situation. We are witnessing the very same thing this time, too.

The ninth plenum of the ECCI, the Sixth Congress, and particularly the tenth plenum, [2] adopted a course towards an abrupt and direct revolutionary rise (the "third period"), which was absolutely excluded at the time by the objective situation existing after the great defeats in Britain and China, the weakening of the Communist parties throughout the world, and particularly under the conditions of a commercial and industrial boom, which embraced a series of the most important capitalist countries. The tactical turn in the Communist International begun in February 1928 was therefore directly contrary to the actual turn of the historic road. From these contradictions arose the tendencies of adventurism, the further isolation of the parties from the masses, the weakening of the organizations, etc. Only after all these phenomena had clearly assumed a menacing character did the leadership of the Comintern make a new turn in February 1930, backward from, and to the right of, the tactics of the "third period."

It is the irony of fate, unmerciful to all chvostism, ["Tailism" -- the theory/practice of following behind events.] that the new tactical turn in the Comintern coincided chronologically with the new turn in the objective conditions. An international crisis of unprecedented acuteness undoubtedly opened the prospect of mass radicalization and social convulsions. Precisely under such circumstances, a turn to the left could and should have been made, that is, boldly speeding up on the curve of the revolutionary upsurge. This would have been absolutely correct and necessary if, in the last three years, the leadership of the Comintern had utilized, as it should have, the period of economic revival and revolutionary ebb to strengthen the positions of the party in the mass organizations, above all in the trade unions. Under such circumstances, the driver could and should have shifted his gears in 1930 from second into third, or at least prepared for such a change in the near future. In reality, the directly opposite process took place. So as not to go over the cliff, the driver had to change from a prematurely adopted speed down to second and slow down the pace. When? Under circumstances in which a correct strategic line would have demanded acceleration.

Such is the crying contradiction between tactical necessity and strategic perspective, a contradiction in which, by the logic of the mistakes of their leadership, the Communist parties find themselves in a number of countries.

We see this contradiction most strikingly and dangerously now in Germany, where the last elections revealed an exceptional peculiar relation of forces, resulting not only from the two periods of Germany's postwar stabilization, but also from the three periods of the Comintern's mistakes.

2. THE PARLIAMENTARY VICTORY OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY IN THE LIGHT OF THE REVOLUTIONARY TASKS

The official press of the Comintern is now depicting the results of the German elections as a prodigious victory of Communism, which places the slogan of a Soviet Germany on the order of the day. The bureaucratic optimists do not want to reflect upon the meaning of the relationship of forces which is disclosed by the election statistics. They examine the figure of Communist votes gained independently of the revolutionary tasks created by the situation and the obstacles it sets up.

The Communist Party received around 4,600,000 votes as against 3,300,000 in 1928. From the viewpoint of "normal" parliamentary mechanics, the gain of 1,300,000 votes is considerable even if we take into consideration the rise in the total number of voters. But the gain of the party pales completely beside the leap of fascism from 800,000 to 6,400,000 votes. Of no less significance for evaluating the elections is the fact that the Social Democracy, in spite of substantial losses, retained its basic cadres and still received a considerably greater number of workers' votes than the Communist Party.

Meanwhile, if we should ask ourselves what combination of international and domestic circumstances could be capable of turning the working class towards Communism with greater velocity, we could not find an example of more favorable circumstances for such a turn than the situation in present-day Germany: Young's noose, [3] the economic crisis, the disintegration of the rulers, the crisis of parliamentarism, the terrific self-exposure of the Social Democracy in power. From the viewpoint of these concrete historical circumstances, the specific gravity of the German Communist Party in the social life of the country, in spite of the gain of 1,300,000 votes, remains proportionately small.

The weakness of the positions of Communism, inextricably bound up with the policy and regime of the Comintern, is revealed more clearly if we compare the present social weight of the Communist Party

with those concrete and unpostponable tasks which the present historical circumstances put before it.

It is true that the Communist Party itself did not expect such a gain. But this proves that under the blows of mistakes and defeats, the leadership of the Communist parties has become unaccustomed to big aims and perspectives. If yesterday it underestimated its own possibilities, then today it once more underestimates the difficulties. In this way, one danger is multiplied by another.

In the meantime, the first characteristic of a real revolutionary party is to be able to look reality in the face.

3. THE VACILLATIONS OF THE BIG BOURGEOISIE

With every turn of the historic road, with every social crisis, we must over and over again examine the question of the mutual relations of the three classes in modern society: the big bourgeoisie, led by finance capital; the petty bourgeoisie, vacillating between the basic camps; and finally, the proletariat. The big bourgeoisie, making up a negligible part of the nation, cannot hold power without the support of the petty bourgeoisie of the city and the village, that is, of the remnants of the old, and the masses of the new, middle classes. In the present epoch, this support acquires two basic forms, politically antagonistic to each other but historically supplementary: Social Democracy and fascism. In the person of the Social Democracy, the petty bourgeoisie, which follows finance capital, leads behind it millions of workers.

The big German bourgeoisie is vacillating at present; it is split up. Its disagreements are confined to the question: Which of the two methods of cure for the social crisis shall be applied at present? The Social Democratic therapy repels one part of the big bourgeoisie by the uncertainty of its results, and by the danger of too large levies (taxes, social legislation, wages). The surgical intervention of fascism seems to the other part to be uncalled for by the situation and too risky. In other words, the finance bourgeoisie as a whole vacillates in the evaluation of the situation, not seeing sufficient basis as yet to proclaim an offensive of its own "third period," when the Social Democracy is unconditionally replaced by fascism, when, generally speaking, it undergoes a general annihilation for its services rendered. The vacillations of the big bourgeoisie -- with the weakening of its basic parties -- between the Social Democracy and fascism are an extraordinarily clear symptom of a prerevolutionary situation. With the approach of a real revolutionary situation, these vacillations will of course immediately come to an end.

4. THE PETTY BOURGEOISIE AND FASCISM

For the social crisis to bring about the proletarian revolution, it is necessary that, besides other conditions, a decisive shift of the petty-bourgeois classes occur in the direction of the proletariat. This will give the proletariat a chance to put itself at the head of the nation as its leader.

The last election revealed -- and this is its principal symptomatic significances -- a shift in the opposite direction. Under the impact of the crisis, the petty bourgeoisie swung, not in the direction of the proletarian revolution, but in the direction of the most extreme imperialist reaction, pulling behind it considerable sections of the proletariat. The gigantic growth of National Socialism is an expression of two factors: a deep social crisis, throwing the petty-bourgeois masses off balance, and the lack of a revolutionary party that would today be regarded by the popular masses as the acknowledged revolutionary leader. If the Communist Party is the party of revolutionary hope, then fascism, as a mass movement, is the party of counter-revolutionary despair. When revolutionary hope embraces the whole proletarian mass, it inevitably pulls behind it on the road of revolution considerable and growing sections of the petty bourgeoisie. Precisely in this sphere, the election revealed the opposite picture:

counterrevolutionary despair embraced the petty-bourgeois mass with such force that it drew behind it many sections of the proletariat.

How is this to be explained? In the past, we have observed (Italy, Germany) a sharp strengthening of fascism, victorious, or at least threatening, as the result of a spent or missed revolutionary situation, at the conclusion of a revolutionary crisis in which the proletarian vanguard revealed its inability to put itself at the head of the nation and change the fate of all its classes, the petty bourgeoisie included. This is precisely what gave fascism its peculiar strength in Italy. But at present the problem in Germany does not arise at the conclusion of a revolutionary crisis, but just at its approach. From this, the leading Communist Party officials, optimists ex officio, draw the conclusion that fascism, having come "too late," is doomed to inevitable and speedy defeat (*Die Rote Fahne*). These people do not want to learn anything. Fascism comes "too later in relation to old revolutionary crises. But it appears sufficiently early -- at the dawn -- in relation to the new revolutionary crisis. The fact that it gained the possibility of taking up such a powerful starting position on the eve of a revolutionary period and not at its conclusion, is not the weak side of fascism but the weak side of Communism. The petty bourgeoisie does not wait, consequently, for new disappointments in the ability of the party to improve its fate; it bases itself upon the experiences of the past, remembering the lesson of 1923, the capricious leaps of the ultra-left course of Maslow-Thaelmann, the opportunist impotence of the same Thaelmann, the clatter of the "third period," etc. [4] Finally -- and this is the most important -- its lack of faith in the proletarian revolution is nourished by the lack of faith in the Communist Party on the part of millions of Social Democratic workers. The petty bourgeoisie, even when completely thrown off the conservative road by circumstances, can turn to social revolution only when the sympathies of the majority of the working class are for a social revolution. Precisely this most important condition is still lacking in Germany, and not by accident.

The programmatic declaration of the German Communist Party before the elections was completely and exclusively devoted to fascism as the main enemy. Nevertheless, fascism came out the victor, gathering not only millions of semi-proletarian elements, but also many hundreds of thousands of industrial workers. This is an expression of the fact that in spite of the parliamentary victory of the Communist Party, the proletarian revolution as a whole suffered a serious defeat in this election -- to be sure, of a preliminary, warning, and not decisive character. It can become decisive and will inevitably become decisive, if the Communist Party is unable to evaluate its partial parliamentary victory in connection with this "preliminary" character of the defeat of the revolution as a whole, and draw from this all the necessary conclusions.

Fascism in Germany has become a real danger, as an acute expression of the helpless position of the bourgeois regime, the conservative role of the Social Democracy in this regime, and the accumulated powerlessness of the Communist Party to abolish it. Whoever denies this is either blind or a braggart.

In 1923, Brandler, [5] in spite of all our warnings, monstrously exaggerated the forces of fascism. From the wrong evaluation of the relationship of forces grew a hesitating, evasive, defensive, cowardly policy. This destroyed the revolution. Such events do not pass without leaving traces in the consciousness of all the classes of the nation. The overestimation of fascism by the Communist leadership created one of the conditions for its further strengthening. The contrary mistake, this very underestimation of fascism by the present leadership of the Communist Party, may lead the revolution to a more severe crash for many years to come.

The danger becomes especially acute in connection with the question of the tempo of development, which does not depend upon us alone. The malarial character of the political curve revealed by the election speaks for the fact that the tempo of development of the national crisis may turn out to be very speedy. In other words, the course of events in the very near future may resurrect in Germany, on a new historical plane, the old tragic contradiction between the maturity of a revolutionary situation on the one hand and the weakness and strategical impotence of the revolutionary party on the other. This must be said clearly, openly, and above all, in time.

5. THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE WORKING CLASS

It would be a monstrous mistake to console oneself with the fact, for instance, that the Bolshevik Party in April 1917, after the arrival of Lenin, when the party first began to prepare for the seizure of power, had fewer than 80,000 members and led behind itself, even in Petrograd, not more than a third of the workers and a far smaller part of the soldiers. The situation in Russia was altogether different. The revolutionary parties came out of the underground only in March, after an almost three-year interruption of even that strangled political life which existed prior to the war. The working class during the war renewed itself approximately 40 percent. The overwhelming mass of the proletariat did not know the Bolsheviks, had not even heard of them. The voting for the Mensheviks and SRs [6] in March-June was simply an expression of the first hesitant steps after the awakening. In this voting there was not even a shadow of disappointment with the Bolsheviks or accumulated lack of faith in them, which can arise only as the result of a party's mistakes, verified by the masses through experience. On the contrary. Every day of revolutionary experience in 1917 pushed the masses away from the conciliators and to the side of the Bolsheviks. From this followed the stormy, inexorable growth of the ranks of the party, and particularly of its influence.

The situation in Germany has at its root a different character, in this respect as well as in others. The German Communist Party did not come upon the scene yesterday, nor the day before. In 1923, it had behind it, openly or in a semiconcealed form, the majority of the working class. In 1924, on the ebbing wave, it received 3,600,000 votes, a greater percentage of the working class than at present. This means that those workers who remained with the Social Democracy, as well as those who voted this time for the National Socialists, did so not out of simple ignorance, not because they awakened only yesterday, not because they have as yet had no chance to know what the Communist Party is, but because they have no faith, on the basis of their own experience in the recent years.

Let us not forget that in February 1928, the ninth plenum of the Executive Committee of the Comintern gave the signal for an intensified, extraordinary, irreconcilable struggle against "social fascism." [7] The German Social Democracy was in power almost all this time, revealing to the masses at every step its criminal and shameful role. And all this was supplemented by an enormous economic crisis. It would be difficult to invent circumstances more favorable for the weakening of the Social Democracy. Nevertheless, it retained its basic positions. How is this striking fact to be explained? Only by the fact that the leadership of the Communist Party, by its whole policy, assisted the Social Democracy, supporting it from the left.

This does not at all mean that by voting for the Social Democracy, five to six million working men and women expressed their full and unlimited confidence in it. The Social Democratic workers should not be considered blind. They are not at all so naive about their own leaders, but they do not see a different way out for themselves in the given situation. Of course, we are not speaking of the labor aristocracy and

bureaucracy, but of the rank-and-file workers. The policy of the Communist Party does not inspire them with confidence, not because the Communist Party is not a revolutionary party, but because they do not believe in its ability to gain a revolutionary victory, and do not wish to risk their heads in vain. Voting reluctantly for the Social Democracy, these workers do not express confidence in it but rather they express their lack of confidence in the Communist Party. This is where the great difference lies between the present position of the German Communists and the position of the Russian Bolsheviks in 1917.

But by this alone, the difficulties are not exhausted: inside the Communist Party itself, and particularly in the circle of its supporters and the workers voting for it, is a great reserve of vague lack of faith in the leadership of the party. From this grows what is called the "disparity" between the general influence of the party and its numerical strength, and particularly its role in the trade unions -- in Germany such a disparity undoubtedly exists. The official explanation of the disparity is that the party has not been able to "strengthen" its influence organizationally. Here the mass is looked upon as purely passive material, which enters or does not enter the party, depending exclusively upon whether the secretary can grab every worker by the throat. The bureaucrat does not understand that workers have their own mind, their experience, their will, and their active or passive policy toward the party. The worker votes for the party -- for its banner, for the October Revolution, for his own future revolution. But by refusing to join the Communist Party or to follow it in the trade-union struggle, he says that he has no faith in its daily policy. The "disparity" is consequently, in the final analysis, an expression of the lack of confidence of the masses in the present leadership of the Communist International. And this lack of confidence, created and strengthened by mistakes, defeats, fictions, and direct deception of the masses from 1923 to 1930, is one of the greatest hindrances on the road to the victory of the proletarian revolution.

Without an internal confidence in itself, the party will not conquer the class. Not to conquer the proletariat means not to break the petty-bourgeois masses away from fascism. One is inextricably bound up with the other.

6. BACK TO THE "SECOND" PERIOD OR ONCE MORE TOWARDS THE "THIRD"?

If we were to use the official terminology of centrism, 8 we would formulate the problem in the following way: the leadership of the Comintern foisted the tactic of the "third period," that is, the tactic of an immediate revolutionary upsurge, upon the national sections at a time (1928) when the features of the "second period" were most clearly visible, that is, the stabilization of the bourgeoisie and the ebb and decline of the revolution. The turn from this, which came in 1930, meant a rejection of the tactic of the "third period" in favor of the tactic of the "second period." In the meantime, this turn made its way through the bureaucratic apparatus at a moment when the most important symptoms began, at any rate in Germany, to signalize plainly the real approach of a "third period." Does the need for a new tactical turn flow from all this -- in the direction of the recently abandoned tactic of the "third period" ?

We use these designations so as to make the posing of this problem more accessible to those circles whose minds are clogged up by the methodology and terminology of the centrist bureaucracy. But we have no intention whatever to adopt this terminology, which conceals a combination of Stalinist bureaucratism and Bukharinist metaphysics. [9] We reject the apocalyptic presentation of the "third" period as the final one: how many periods there will be before the victory of the proletariat is a question of the relation of forces and the changes in the situation; all this can be tested only through action. We reject the very essence of this strategic schematism with its numbered periods; there is no abstract tactic established in advance for the "second" and the "third" periods. It is understood that we cannot achieve

not a parliamentary crisis, but a crisis of class rule.

3. The revolutionary class, however, is still deeply split by internal contradictions. The strengthening of the revolutionary party at the expense of the reformists is as yet at its inception, and has been proceeding thus far at a tempo which is far from corresponding with the depth of the crisis.

4. The petty bourgeoisie, at the very beginning of the crisis, has already assumed a position antagonistic to the present system of capitalist rule, but at the same time mortally hostile to the proletarian revolution.

In other words, there are at hand the basic objective conditions for a proletarian revolution. There is one of its political conditions (the state of the ruling class); the other political condition (the state of the proletariat) has only begun to change in the direction of revolution, and because of the heritage of the past, cannot change rapidly; finally, the third political condition (the state of the petty bourgeoisie) is not directed towards the proletarian revolution but towards a bourgeois counterrevolution. The change of this last condition into a favorable one cannot be accomplished without radical changes in the proletariat itself, that is, without the political liquidation of the Social Democracy.

We have, thus, a deeply contradictory situation. Some of its factors put the proletarian revolution on the order of the day: others, however, exclude the possibility of its victory in the next period, that is, without a previous deep change in the political relation of forces.

Theoretically, several variations of the further development of the present situation in Germany can be considered, depending upon objective factors, the policy of the class enemies included, as well as the conduct of the Communist Party itself. Let us note schematically four possible variations of development.

1. The Communist Party, frightened by its own strategy of the "third period," moves ahead gropingly, with extreme caution, avoiding risky steps, and -- without giving battle -- misses a revolutionary situation. This would mean a repetition of the policy of Brandler in 1921-1923, only changed in form. Reflecting the pressure of the Social Democracy, the Brandlerites and semi-Brandlerites, outside the party as well as inside of it, will drive in this direction.

2. Under the influence of the election success, the party, on the contrary, makes a new sharp turn to the left, in the direction of a direct struggle for power, and being a party of the active minority, suffers a catastrophic defeat. Driving in this direction are: fascism; the clamorous, senseless agitation of the apparatus which does not weigh anything, which does not enlighten, but stupefies; the despair and impatience of a part of the working class, particularly the unemployed youth.

3. It is possible, furthermore, that the leadership, rejecting nothing, will attempt empirically to find a middle course between the dangers of the first two variations, and in this connection, will commit a series of new mistakes and, in general, will so slowly eliminate the lack of confidence of the proletarian and semi-proletarian masses, that by that time the objective conditions will have changed in a direction unfavorable for a revolution, giving way to a new period of stabilization. It is chiefly in this eclectic direction, combining chvostism in general with adventurism in particular, that the Moscow Stalinist top is pushing the German party, fearing to take a clear position and preparing an alibi for itself beforehand, that is, a possibility of putting the blame on the "performers" -- at the right or at the left, depending upon the results. This policy, with which we are familiar enough, sacrifices the international historical interests of the proletariat to the interests of the "prestige of the bureaucratic top. Intimations of such a course have already been given in Pravda on September 16.

4. Finally, the most propitious, or more correctly, the only propitious variation: the German party, through the efforts of its best and most conscious elements, takes a careful survey of the whole present contradictory situation. By a correct audacious, and flexible policy, the party, on the basis of the present situation, succeeds in uniting the majority of the proletariat and thus secures a reversal in the direction of the semi-proletarian and most oppressed petty-bourgeois masses. The proletarian vanguard, as leader of the nation of the toiling and oppressed, comes to victory. To help the party change its policy towards this course is the task of the Bolshevik-Leninists (Left Opposition).

It would be fruitless to guess which of these variations has better chances of happening in the next period. Such questions are not decided by guesses but by struggle.

One necessary element is an irreconcilable ideological struggle against the centrist leadership of the Comintern. From Moscow, the signal has already been given for a policy of bureaucratic prestige which covers up yesterday's mistakes and prepares tomorrow's through false cries about the new triumph of the line. Monstrously exaggerating the victory of the party, monstrously underestimating the difficulties, interpreting even the success of fascism as a positive factor for the proletarian revolution, Pravda necessarily makes one small stipulation. "The successes of the party should not make us dizzy." The treacherous policy of the Stalinist leadership is true to itself even here. An analysis of the situation is given in the spirit of uncritical ultra-leftism. The party is thus deliberately pushed onto the road of adventurism. At the same time, Stalin prepares his alibi in advance with the aid of the ritualistic phrase about "dizziness." It is precisely this policy, shortsighted, unscrupulous, that may ruin the German revolution.

8. WHERE IS THE WAY OUT?

We have given above, without any glossing over or embellishment an analysis of difficulties and dangers related as a whole to the political and subjective sphere, which grew primarily out of the mistakes and crimes of the epigone leadership, and which now definitely threaten to demolish a new revolutionary situation developing before our very eyes. The officials will either close their eyes to our analysis or else they will replenish their stock of slander. But it is not a matter of hopeless officials; it concerns the fate of the German proletariat. In the party, as well as in the apparatus, there are not a few people who observe and think, and who will be compelled tomorrow by sharp circumstances to think with doubled intensity. It is to them that we direct our analysis and our conclusions.

Every critical situation has great sources of uncertainty. Moods, views, and forces, hostile and friendly, are formed in the very process of the crisis. They cannot be foreseen mathematically. They must be measured in the process of the struggle, through struggle; and on the basis of these living measurements, necessary corrections must be made in the policy.

Can the strength of the conservative resistance of the Social Democratic workers be calculated beforehand? It cannot. In the light of the events of the past years, this strength seems to be gigantic. But the truth is that what helped most of all to weld together Social Democracy was the wrong policy of the Communist Party, which found its highest expression in the absurd theory of social fascism. To measure the real resistance of the Social Democratic ranks, a different measuring instrument is required, that is, a correct Communist tactic. Given this condition -- and it is not a small condition -- the degree of internal corrosion of the Social Democracy can be revealed in a comparatively brief period.

In a different form, what has been said above also applies to fascism: it arose, among the other conditions

present from the tremblings of the Zinoviev-Stalin strategy. [10] What is its offensive power? What is its stability? Has it reached its culminating point as the optimists ex officio assure us, or is it only on the first step of the ladder? This cannot be foretold mechanically. It can be determined only through action. Precisely In regard to fascism, which is a razor in the hands of the class enemy, the wrong policy of the Comintern may produce fatal results in a brief period. On the other hand, a correct policy -- not in such a short period, it is true -- can undermine the positions of fascism.

A revolutionary party, at the time of a crisis in the regime, is much stronger in the extraparliamentary mass struggles than within the framework of parliamentarism. But again, on one condition: if it understands the situation correctly and can connect in practice the vital needs of the masses with the task of seizing power. Everything is now reduced to this. It would therefore be the greatest mistake to see in the present situation in Germany only difficulties and dangers. No, the situation also reveals tremendous possibilities, provided it is clearly and thoroughly understood and correctly utilized.

What is needed for this?

1. A forced turn to the right at the time when the situation is swinging to the left calls for particularly attentive, honest, and skillful observation for further changes in all the factors of the situation. The abstract contrasting of the methods of the second and third periods must be rejected at once. The situation must be taken as it is, with all its contradictions and the living dynamics of its development. We must carefully watch the real changes in the situation and influence it in the direction of its real development -- not to suit the schemes of Molotov or Kuusinen. [11] To be oriented in the situation-that is the most important and most difficult part of the problem. It cannot be solved at all by bureaucratic methods. Statistics, important though they are by themselves, are insufficient for this purpose. It is necessary to sound the very deepest mass of the proletariat and the toilers generally. We must not only advance the vital and gripping slogans; we must trace the hold they get on the masses. This can be achieved only by an active party which puts out tens of thousands of feelers everywhere, which gathers the testimony, considers all the questions, and actively works out its collective viewpoint.

2. The question of the party regime is inextricably bound up with this. People appointed by Moscow, independent of the confidence or lack of confidence of the party, will not be able to lead the masses in an assault upon capitalist society. The more artificial the present regime, the deeper will be its crisis in the days and hours of decision. Of all the "turns," the most important and urgent one concerns the party regime. It is a question of life or death.

3. A change in the regime is the precondition for a change in the course and its consequence at the same time. One is inconceivable without the other. The party must break away from the false atmosphere of conventionality, of hushing up real trouble, of glorifying spurious values -- in a word, from the disastrous atmosphere of Stalinism, which is not created by ideological and political influence but by the crude, material dependence of the apparatus and the methods of command based on that.

One of the necessary conditions for the liberation of the party from bureaucratic bondage is a general examination of the "general line" of the German leadership, beginning with 1923, and even with the March Days of 1921. [12] The Left Opposition, in a number of documents and theoretical works, has given its evaluation of all the stages of the unfortunate official policy of the Comintern. This criticism must become the property of the party. To avoid it or to be silent about it will not be possible. The party will not rise to the height of its great tasks if it does not freely evaluate its present in the light of its past.

4. If the Communist Party, in spite of the exceptionally favorable circumstances, has proved powerless seriously to shake the structure of the Social Democracy with the aid of the formula of "social fascism," then real fascism now threatens this structure, no longer with wordy formulas of so-called radicalism, but with the chemical formulas of explosives. No matter how true it is that the Social Democracy prepared the blossoming of fascism by its whole policy, it is no less true that fascism comes forward as a deadly threat primarily to that same Social Democracy, all of whose magnificence is inextricably bound up with parliamentary-democratic-pacifist forms and methods of government.

There can be no doubt that at the crucial moment the leaders of the Social Democracy will prefer the triumph of fascism to the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. But precisely the approach of such a choice creates exceptional difficulties for the Social Democratic leaders among their own workers. The policy of a united front of the workers against fascism flows from this whole situation. It opens up tremendous possibilities for the Communist Party. A condition for success, however, is the rejection of the theory and practice of "social fascism," the harm of which becomes a positive menace under the present circumstances.

The social crisis will inevitably produce deep cleavages within the Social Democracy. The radicalization of the masses will affect the Social Democratic workers long before they cease to be Social Democrats. We will inevitably have to make agreements against fascism with the various Social Democratic organizations and factions, putting definite conditions to the leaders in full view of the masses. Only the frightened opportunists, yesterday's allies of Purcell and Cook, of Chiang Kaishek and Wang Chin-wei, [13] can bind themselves by formal commitments beforehand against such agreements. We must return from the official's empty phrase about the united front to the policy of the united front as it was formulated by Lenin and always applied by the Bolsheviks in 1917.

5. The problem of unemployment is one of the most important elements of the political crisis. The struggle against capitalist rationalization and for the seven-hour working day remains entirely on the order of the day. But only the slogan of an extensive, planned collaboration with the Soviet Union can raise this struggle to the height of the revolutionary tasks. In the programmatic declaration for the election, the Central Committee of the German party states that after achieving power the Communists will establish economic collaboration with the Soviet Union. There is no doubt of this. But a historical perspective cannot be counterposed to the political tasks of the day. The workers, and the unemployed in the first place, must be mobilized right now under the slogan of extensive economic collaboration with the Soviet republic. The State Planning Commission of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics should work out a plan of economic collaboration with the help of the German Communists and trade unionists, which, using the present unemployment as its point of departure, would spread out into a comprehensive collaboration embracing all the basic branches of the economy. The problem does not lie in promising to reconstruct the economy after the seizure of power; it lies in seizing power. The problem is not to promise the collaboration of Soviet Germany with the USSR, but to win the working masses for this collaboration today, linking it closely with the crisis and unemployment, and spreading it further into a gigantic plan for the socialist reconstruction of both countries.

6. The political crisis in Germany brings into question the Versailles regime in Europe. 14 The Central Committee of the German Communist Party declares that, having taken power, the German proletariat will liquidate the Versailles documents. Is that all? The abolition of the Versailles Treaty as the highest achievement of the proletarian revolution! What is to be put in its place? There is not a word about this. Such a negative way of putting the question brings the party close to the National Socialists. The Soviet

United States of Europe -- that is the only correct slogan which points the way out of the splintering of Europe, which threatens not only Germany but all of Europe with complete economic and cultural decline.

The slogan of the proletarian unification of Europe is simultaneously a very important weapon in the struggle against the abomination of fascist chauvinism, the baiting of France, and so forth. The most incorrect, the most dangerous policy is that of passive adaptation to the enemy by painting oneself to look like him. The slogans of national despair and national frenzy must be opposed by slogans of international liberation. For this, the party must be purged of national socialism, the principal element of which is the theory of socialism in one country. [15]

To reduce all that has been said above to one simple formula, let us pose the question thus: Must the tactics of the German Communist Party in the immediate period follow an offensive or defensive line? We answer: defensive.

If, as the result of a Communist Party offensive, a collision were to occur today, the proletarian vanguard would smash its head against the bloc between the state and the fascists, with the majority of the working class remaining in frightened and bewildered neutrality and the majority of the petty bourgeoisie directly supporting the fascists.

Assuming a defensive position means a policy of closing ranks with the majority of the German working class and forming a united front with the Social Democratic and nonparty workers against the fascist threat. Denying this threat, belittling it, failing to take it seriously is the greatest crime that can be committed today against the proletarian revolution in Germany.

What will the Communist Party "defend"? The Weimar Constitution? No, we will leave that task to Brandler. The Communist Party must call for the defense of those material and moral positions which the working class has managed to win in the German state. This most directly concerns the fate of the workers' political organizations, trade unions, newspapers, printing plants, clubs, libraries, etc. Communist workers must say to their Social Democratic counterparts: "The policies of our parties are irreconcilably opposed; but if the fascists come tonight to wreck your organization's hall, we will come running, arms in hand, to help you. Will you promise us that if our organization is threatened you will rush to our aid?" This is the quintessence of our policy in the present period. All agitation must be pitched in this key.

The more persistently, seriously, and thoughtfully -- without the whining and boasting the workers so quickly tire of -- we carry on this agitation, the more we propose serious measures for defense in every factory, in every working-class neighborhood and district, the less the danger that a fascist attack will take us by surprise, and the greater the certainty that such an attack will cement, rather than break apart, the ranks of the workers.

Indeed, the fascists, thanks to their dizzying success, thanks to the petty-bourgeois, impatient, and undisciplined makeup of their army, will be inclined in the coming period to rush headlong onto the offensive. To compete with them in this course now would be not only hopeless, but also mortally dangerous. On the contrary, the more the fascists appear the aggressors in the eyes of the Social Democratic workers and the toiling masses in general, and the more we appear to be the defending side, the greater our chances will be not only of routing the fascist attack, but also of being able to take the offensive ourselves. The defense must be vigilant active, and bold. The general staff must survey the

entire field of battle, taking all changes into account so as not to miss any new turning point in the situation when the signal for a general assault may be called for.

There are strategists who always take the defensive, whatever the circumstances; for example, the Brandlerites. To be confused by the fact that they speak for defense today, too, would be the purest childishness: they do this all the time. The Brandlerites are one of the mouthpieces of Social Democracy. Our own task consists in moving the Social Democratic workers, after a rapprochement is made with them on the basis of defense, over into a decisive offensive. The Brandlerites are absolutely incapable of this. The moment the relationship of forces changes radically to the advantage of the proletarian revolution, the Brandlerites will again turn out to be ballast, a brake on the revolution. That is why the policy of defense, although it depends on a rapprochement with the Social Democratic workers, in no case signifies a softening of our opposition to the Brandlerite general staff, behind whom there never will be any mass movement.

In connection with the alignment of forces and the tasks of the proletarian vanguard characterized above, the methods of physical violence used by the Stalinist bureaucracies in Germany and in other countries toward the Bolshevik-Leninists take on especially great significance. This is a direct service to the Social Democratic police and the shock troops of fascism. Fundamentally in contradiction to the traditions of the revolutionary proletarian movement, these methods, as never before, accord with the mood of the petty-bourgeois bureaucrats, sitting tight with their big salaries assured from above and afraid of losing them in an onslaught of party democracy. Against the infamies of the Stalinists, broad explanatory work is necessary, as concrete as it can be, including an expose of the roles of the unworthiest of the bureaucrats in the party apparatus. The experience of the USSR and of other countries testifies that those gentlemen who fight the Left Opposition with the most fury are the ones who most of all have to hide their own sins and crimes from their high command waste of public funds, abuse of positions, or simply their own complete uselessness. It is perfectly clear that the more we expand our general agitation on the basis of the tasks outlined above, the more successful will be our exposure of the strong-arm exploits of the Stalinist apparatus against the Bolshevik-Leninists.

We have examined the question of the tactical turn in the Communist International exclusively in the light of the German situation because, in the first place, the German crisis now puts the German Communist Party once more in the center of attention of the world proletarian vanguard, and because in the light of this crisis all the problems are brought out in sharpest relief. It would not be difficult, however, to show that what has been said here also holds good, to one degree or another, for other countries.

In France, all the forms of class struggle after the war bear an immeasurably less sharp and less decisive character than they do in Germany. But the general tendencies of development are the same, not to speak of the direct dependence of the fate of France upon the fate of Germany. At any rate, the turns of the Communist International have a universal character. The French Communist Party, which was declared by Molotov back in 1928 to be the first candidate for power, has conducted an absolutely suicidal policy in the last two years. It especially overlooked the economic rise. The tactical turn was proclaimed in France at the very moment when the crisis began to take the place of the industrial revival. In this way, the same contradictions, difficulties, and tasks about which we speak in reference to Germany, are on the order of the day in France as well.

The turn in the Comintern combined with the turn in the situation, puts new and exceptionally important

tasks before the Communist Left Opposition. Its forces are small. But every current grows together with the growth of its tasks. To understand them clearly is to possess one of the most important guarantees of victory.

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Leon Trotsky

THAELMANN AND THE "PEOPLE'S REVOLUTION"

Written in exile in Turkey, April 14, 1931

Letter to a comrade in Spain

(Spanish monarchy had fallen, republic was forming.)

First appeared in The Militant, July 11 1931

Thanks for the quotation about the "people's" revolution from Thaelmann's speech, which I glanced through. A more ridiculous and maliciously confused manner of putting the question cannot be imagined! "The people's revolution" -- as a slogan and even with a reference to Lenin. Yet every issue of the paper of the fascist Strasser [1] is embellished with the slogan of the people's revolution as opposed to the Marxist slogan of the class revolution. It is understood that every great revolution is a people's or a national revolution, in the sense that it unites around the revolutionary class all the virile and creative forces of the nation and reconstructs the nation around a new core. But this is not a slogan; it is a sociological description of the revolution, which requires, moreover, precise and concrete definition. As a slogan, it is inane and charlatanism, market competition with the fascists, paid for at the price of injecting confusion into the minds of the workers.

The evolution of the slogans of the Comintern is a striking one, precisely on this question. After the Third Congress of the Comintern, the slogan of "class against class" became the popular expression of the policy of the united proletarian front. This was quite correct: all workers should be consolidated against the bourgeoisie. This they afterwards transformed into the alliance with the reformist bureaucrats against the workers (the experience of the British General Strike). Later on, they went over to the opposite extreme: no agreements with the reformists, "class against class." The very slogan which was to serve for drawing the Social Democratic workers closer to the Communist workers came to mean, in the "third period," the struggle against the Social Democratic workers as against a different class. Now the new turn: the people's revolution instead of the proletarian revolution. The fascist Strasser says 95 percent of the people are interested in the revolution, consequently it is not a class revolution but a people's revolution. Thaelmann sings in chorus. In reality, the worker-Communist should say to the fascist worker: of course, 95 percent of the population, if not 98 percent, is exploited by finance capital. But this exploitation is organized hierarchically: there are exploiters, there are subexploiters, sub-subexploiters, etc. Only thanks to this hierarchy do the superexploiters keep in subjection the majority of the nation. In order that the nation should indeed be able to reconstruct itself around a new class core, it must be reconstructed ideologically and this can be achieved only if the proletariat does not dissolve itself into the "people," into the "nation," but on the contrary develops a program of its proletarian revolution and compels the petty bourgeoisie to choose between two regimes. The slogan of the people's revolution lulls the petty bourgeoisie as well as the broad masses of the workers, reconciles them to the bourgeois-hierarchical structure of the "people" and retards their liberation. But under present conditions in Germany, the slogan of a people's revolution wipes away the ideological demarcation between Marxism and fascism and reconciles part of the workers and the petty bourgeoisie to the ideology of fascism, allowing them to think that they are not compelled to make a choice, because in both camps it is all a matter of a people's revolution. These wretched revolutionists, in a conflict with any serious enemy, think first of all of how to imitate him, how to repaint themselves in his colors, and how to win the masses by means of a smart trick and not by revolutionary struggle. A truly shameful posing of the question! If the weak Spanish Communists were to make this formula their own, they would arrive

at the policy of a Spanish Kuomintang. [2]

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Leon Trotsky

WORKERS' CONTROL OF PRODUCTION

by

Leon Trotsky

Written in exile in Turkey, August 20 1931

Letter to group of German Left Oppositionists.

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In answering your question I will endeavor to jot down here, as a preliminary to an exchange of opinions, a few general considerations pertaining to the slogan of workers' control of production.

The first question that arises in this connection is: Can we picture workers' control of production as a stable regime, not everlasting, of course, but of quite long duration? In order to reply to the question it is necessary to determine the class nature of this regime more clearly. Control lies in the hands of the workers. This means: ownership and right of disposition remain in the hands of the capitalists. Thus, the regime has a contradictory character, presenting a sort of economic interregnum.

The workers need control not for platonic purposes, but in order to exert practical influence upon the production and commercial operations of the employers. This cannot, however, be attained unless the control, in one form or another, within such and such limits, is transformed into direct management. In a developed form, workers' control thus implies a sort of economic dual power in the factory, the bank, commercial enterprise, and so forth.

If the participation of the workers in the management of production is to be lasting, stable, "normal," it must rest upon class collaboration, and not upon class struggle. Such a class collaboration can be realized only through the upper strata of the trade unions and the capitalist associations. There have been not a few such experiments: in Germany ("economic democracy"), in Britain ("Mondism"), etc." Yet, in all these instances, it was not a case of workers' control over capital, but of the subserviency of the labor bureaucracy to capital. Such subserviency, as experience shows, can last for a long time: depending on the patience of the proletariat.

The closer it is to production, to the factory, to the shop, the less possible such a regime is, for here it is a matter of the immediate, vital interests of the workers, and the whole process unfolds under their very eyes. workers' control through factory councils is conceivable only on the basis of sharp class struggle, not collaboration. But this really means dual power in the enterprises, in the trusts, in all the branches of industry, in the whole economy.

What state regime corresponds to workers' control of production? It is obvious that the power is not yet in the hands of the proletariat, otherwise we would have not workers' control of production but the control of production by the workers' state as an introduction to a regime of state production on the foundations of nationalization. What we are talking about is workers' control under the capitalist regime, under the power of the bourgeoisie. However, a bourgeoisie that feels it is firmly in the saddle will never tolerate dual power in its enterprises. workers' control consequently, can be carried out only under the condition of an abrupt change in the relationship of forces unfavorable to the bourgeoisie and its state. Control can be imposed only by force upon the bourgeoisie, by a proletariat on the road to the moment of taking power from them, and then also ownership of the means of production. Thus the regime of

workers' control, a provisional transitional regime by its very essence, can correspond only to the period of the convulsing of the bourgeois state, the proletarian offensive, and the failing back of the bourgeoisie, that is, to the period of the proletarian revolution in the fullest sense of the word.

If the bourgeois is already no longer the master, that is, not entirely the master, in his factory, then it follows that he is also no longer completely the master in his state. This means that to the regime of dual power in the factories corresponds the regime of dual power in the state.

This correspondence, however, should not be understood mechanically, that is, not as meaning that dual power in the enterprises and dual power in the state are born on one and the same day. An advanced regime of dual power, as one of the highly probable stages of the proletarian revolution in every country, can develop in different countries in different ways, from differing elements. Thus, for example, in certain circumstances (a deep and persevering economic crisis, a strong state of organization of the workers in the enterprises, a relatively weak revolutionary party, a relatively strong state keeping a vigorous fascism in reserve, etc.) workers' control of production can come considerably ahead of developed political dual power in a country.

Under the conditions mentioned above in broad outline, now especially characteristic of Germany, dual power in the country can develop precisely from workers' control as its main source. One must dwell upon this fact, if only to reject that fetishism of the soviet form which the epigones in the Comintern have put into circulation.

According to the official view prevailing at the present time, the proletarian revolution can be accomplished only by means of the soviets; these, in turn, must be created specifically for the purpose of the armed uprising. This cliché is not appropriate to anything. The soviets are only an organizational form; the question is decided by the class content of the policy and by no means by its form. In Germany, there were Ebert-Scheidemann soviets. [2] In Russia, the conciliationist soviets attacked the workers and soldiers in July 1917. After that Lenin thought for a time that we would have to achieve the armed uprising supporting ourselves not on the soviets, but on the factory committees. This calculation was refuted by the course of events, for we were able, in the six to eight weeks before the uprising, to win over the most important soviets. But this very example shows how little we were inclined to consider the soviets as a panacea. In the fall of 1923, defending against Stalin and others the necessity of passing over to the revolutionary offensive, I fought at the same time against the creation, on command, of soviets in Germany side by side with the factory councils, which were already actually beginning to fulfill the role of soviets.

There is much to be said for the idea that in the present revolutionary upsurge, also, the factory councils in Germany, at a certain stage of their development will be able to play the role of soviets and replace them. Upon what do I base this supposition? Upon the analysis of the conditions under which the soviets arose in Russia in February-March 1917, and in Germany and Austria in November 1918. In all three places, the main organizers of the soviets were Mensheviks and Social Democrats, who were forced to do it by the conditions of the "democratic revolution in time of war. In Russia, the Bolsheviks were successful in winning over the soviets from the conciliators. In Germany, they did not succeed, and that is why the soviets disappeared.

Today, in 1931, the word "soviets" sounds quite different from the way it sounded in 1917-1918. Today it is a synonym for the dictatorship of the Bolsheviks, and hence a bugbear on the lips of the Social Democracy. The Social Democrats in Germany will not only not seize the initiative in the creation of

soviets for the second time, and not join voluntarily in this initiative -- they will fight against it to the last. In the eyes of the bourgeois state, especially its fascist guard, the Communists' setting to work creating soviets will be equivalent to a direct declaration of civil war by the proletariat, and consequently could provoke a decisive clash before the Communist Party itself deems it expedient.

All these considerations prompt us strongly to doubt if one could succeed, before the uprising and the seizure of power in Germany, in creating soviets which would really embrace the majority of the workers. In my opinion, it is more probable that in Germany the soviets will be born the morning after the victory, by then as direct organs of power.

The question of the factory councils is another matter altogether. They already exist today. Both Communists and Social Democrats are building them. In a certain sense, the factory councils are the realization of the united front of the working class. They will broaden and deepen this particular function with the rise of the revolutionary tide. Their role will grow, as will their encroachments into the life of the factory, of the city, of the branches of industry, of the regions, and finally of the whole state. Provincial, regional, and national congresses of the factory councils can serve as the basis for the organs that will in fact fulfill the role of soviets, that is, the organs of dual power. To draw the Social Democratic workers into this regime through the medium of factory councils will be much easier than to call upon the workers directly to construct soviets on a certain day at a given hour.

The central body of a city's factory councils can thoroughly fulfill the role of the city soviet. This was observed in Germany in 1923. By extending their function, setting for themselves ever bolder tasks, and creating their own federal organs, the factory councils can grow into soviets, having closely united the Social Democratic and Communist workers; and they can serve as the organizational base for the insurrection. After the victory of the proletariat these factory councils/soviets will naturally have to separate themselves into factory councils in the proper sense of the word, and into soviets as organs of the dictatorship of the proletariat

By all this, we do not at all mean that the creation of soviets before the proletarian overturn in Germany is completely excluded in advance. There is no possibility of foreseeing all conceivable variants of the development. Were the breakup of the bourgeois state to come long before the proletarian revolution; were fascism to be smashed to bits or to burn out before the uprising of the proletariat then the conditions could be created for the construction of soviets as the organs of the struggle for power. Of course, in that event the Communists would have to perceive the situation in time and raise the slogan of soviets. This would be the most favorable situation conceivable for the proletarian uprising. If it takes shape, it has to be utilized to the end. But to count upon it in advance is quite impossible. So long as the Communists must reckon with a still sufficiently strong bourgeois state, with the reserve army of fascism at its back, the road through the factory councils and not through soviets appears to be the much more probable one.

The epigones have purely mechanically adopted the notion that workers' control of production, like soviets, can only be realized under revolutionary conditions. If the Stalinists tried to arrange their prejudices in a definite system, they would probably argue as follows: workers' control as a sort of economic dual power is inconceivable without political dual power in the country, which in turn is inconceivable without the opposition of soviets to the bourgeois power; consequently -- the Stalinists would be inclined to conclude -- to advance the slogan of workers' control of production is admissible only simultaneously with the slogan of soviets.

From all that has been said above, it is quite clear how false, schematic, and lifeless is such a

construction. In practice, this is transformed into the unique ultimatum which the party puts to the workers: I, the party, will allow you to fight for workers' control only in the event that you agree simultaneously to build soviets. But this is precisely what is involved -- that these two processes need not necessarily run in parallel and simultaneously. Under the influence of crisis, unemployment and the predatory manipulations of the capitalists, the working class in its majority may turn out to be ready to fight for the abolition of business secrecy and for control over banks, commerce, and production before it has come to understand the necessity of the revolutionary conquest for power.

After taking the path of control of production, the proletariat will inevitably press forward in the direction of the seizure of power and of the means of production. Questions of credits, of raw materials, of markets, will immediately extend control beyond the confines of individual enterprises. In so highly industrialized a country as Germany, the questions of export and import right away ought to raise workers' control to the level of national tasks and to counterpose the central organs of workers' control to the official organs of the bourgeois state. The contradictions, irreconcilable in their essence, of the regime of workers' control will inevitably be sharpened to the degree that its sphere and its tasks are extended, and soon will become intolerable. A way out of these contradictions can be found either in the capture of power by the proletariat (Russia) or in the fascist counterrevolution, which establishes the naked dictatorship of capital (Italy). It is precisely in Germany, with its strong Social Democracy, that the struggle for workers' control of production will in all probability be the first stage of the revolutionary united front of the workers, which precedes their open struggle for power.

Can the slogan of workers' control, however, be raised right now? Has the revolutionary situation ripened enough for that? The question is hard to answer from the sidelines. There is no thermometer which would permit the determination, immediately and accurately, of the temperature of the revolutionary situation. One is compelled to determine it in action, in struggle, with the aid of the most various measuring instruments. One of these instruments, perhaps one of the most important under the given conditions, is precisely the slogan of workers' control of production.

The significance of this slogan lies primarily in the fact that on the basis of it, the united front of the Communist workers with the Social Democratic, nonparty, Christian, [3] and other workers can be prepared. The attitude of the Social Democratic workers is decisive. The revolutionary united front of the Communists and the Social Democrats -- that is the fundamental political condition that is lacking in Germany for a directly revolutionary situation. The presence of a strong fascism is surely a serious obstacle on the road to victory. But fascism can retain its power of attraction only because the proletariat is split up and weak, and because it lacks the possibility of leading the German people onto the road of the victorious revolution. The revolutionary united front of the working class already signifies, in itself, a fatal political blow to fascism.

For this reason, be it said in passing, the policy of the German Communist Party leadership on the question of the referendum [4] has an especially criminal character. The most rabid foe could not have thought up a surer way of inciting the Social Democratic workers against the Communist Party and of holding up the development of the policy of the revolutionary united front.

Now this mistake must be corrected. The slogan of workers' control can be extraordinarily useful in this regard. However, it must be approached correctly. Advanced without the necessary preparation, as a bureaucratic command, the slogan of workers' control may not only prove to be a blank shot, but even more, may compromise the party in the eyes of the working masses by undermining confidence in it even

among those workers who today vote for it. Before officially raising this very crucial slogan, the situation must be read well and the ground for it prepared.

We must begin from below, from the factory, from the shop. The questions of workers' control must be checked and adapted for the operation of certain typical industrial, banking, and commercial enterprises. We must take as a point of departure especially clear cases of speculation, the hidden lockout, perfidious understatement of profits aimed at reductions of wages or mendacious exaggeration of production costs for the same purpose, and so forth. In an enterprise which has fallen victim to such machinations, the Communist workers must be the ones through whom are felt the moods of the rest of the working masses, above all, of the Social Democratic workers: to what extent they would be ready to respond to the demand to abolish business secrecy and establish workers' control of production. Using the occasion of particularly clear individual cases, we must begin with a direct statement of the question to conduct

consideration the consciousness of the masses, and not that of Stalin's allies of that time, Chiang Kai-shek and Wang Chin-wei. The Chinese workers have no Social Democratic, conservative traditions. The enthusiasm for the Soviet Union was truly universal. Even the present-day peasants' movement in China strives to adopt soviet forms. All the more general was the striving of the masses for soviets in the years 1925-1927.

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Leon Trotsky

FACTORY COUNCILS AND WORKERS' CONTROL OF PRODUCTION

Written in exile in Turkey, September 12 1931

Translated for The Militant, November 21 1931 July 20, 1933

Dear Comrades:

You refute the slogan of workers' control of production in general and the attempts to achieve it by the factory councils, in particular. Your main reason is the statement that the "legal" factory councils are inadequate for the purpose. Nowhere in my article did I speak of "legal" factory councils. Not only that: I pointed out quite unequivocally that the factory councils can become organs of workers' control only on the premise of such pressure on the part of the masses that a dual power in the factories and in the country has been partly prepared and partly already established. It is clear that this can happen as little under the existing law on the factory councils, as the revolution can take place in the framework of the Weimar Constitution. [1]

And only anarchists can draw the conclusion from this that it is impermissible to exploit either the Weimar Constitution or the law on the factory councils. It is necessary to exploit the one as well as the other. But, in a revolutionary fashion. The factory councils are not what the law makes them, but what the workers make them. At a certain stage, the workers dislocate the framework of the law or break it down, or else simply disregard it altogether. Precisely therein consists the transition to a purely revolutionary situation. Still, this transition is as yet before us, and not behind us. It must be prepared.

That careerists, fascists, Social Democrats are very often to be found in the factory councils, does not speak against making use of them, but only proves the weakness of the revolutionary party. As long as the workers tolerate such factory councilmen, they will not be able to make a revolution. Apart from the workers, the party cannot grow stronger, for the most important arena for the activity of the workers is the factory.

But, you will reply, there are the thousands of the unemployed in Germany. I did not overlook this. But what conclusion can be drawn from this? To neglect the employed workers entirely and to stake all hopes on the unemployed? That would be a purely anarchist tactic. Naturally, the unemployed form a powerful revolutionary factor, particularly so in Germany. But not as an independent proletarian army; rather as the left wing of such an army. The chief kernel of the workers is always to be sought in the factory. That is why the question of the factory councils continues to exist in all its sharpness.

Furthermore, even for the unemployed it is not at all of no concern what takes place in the enterprises and in the process of production as a whole. The unemployed must unreservedly be drawn in on the control of production. Its organizational forms will be found. They will result from the practical struggle itself. Naturally, all this will not take place in the framework of the existing laws. But forms must be found that will embrace the employed as well as the unemployed. One's own weakness and passivity cannot be justified by referring to the existence of the unemployed.

You say that the Brandlerites are for control of production and for the factory councils. Unfortunately, I have long ago ceased to follow their literature, because of lack of time. I do not know how they pose the

question. It is quite probable that here too they have not rid themselves of the spirit of opportunism and Philistinism. But can the position of the Brandlerites, even in a negative sense, have a decisive importance for us? The Brandlerites learned something at the Third Congress of the Comintern. They distort the Bolshevik methods of the struggle for the masses in their application or propagation. Must we really, for this reason, give up these methods?

As I can gather from your letter, you are also opponents of work in the trade unions and participation in parliament. If that is the case, then we are separated by an abyss from one another. I am a Marxist, not a Bakuninist. [2] I stand on the ground of the reality of bourgeois society, in order to find in it the forces and the levers with which to overthrow it.

As against the factory councils, the trade unions, parliament you count vehemently the trade union system. But in this

Leon Trotsky
AGAINST NATIONAL COMMUNISM!
(Lessons of the "Red Referendum")

by
Leon Trotsky
Written in exile in Turkey, August 25 1931
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Translated for The Militant, September 19 / 26 and October 10 1931

When these lines reach the reader, they will, perhaps, in one section or another, be out of date. Through the efforts of the Stalinist apparatus and the friendly collaboration of all the bourgeois governments, the author of these lines is placed in such circumstances under which he can react to political events only after a delay of several weeks. To this must also be added that the author is obliged to rely on far from complete information. The reader should bear this in mind. But even from the extremely unfavorable circumstances, we must attempt to extract at least some advantage. Unable to react to events in all their concreteness, from day to day, the author is compelled to concentrate his attention on the basic points and the central questions. This is where the justification lies for this work.

HOW EVERYTHING IS TURNED UPON ITS HEAD

The mistakes of the German Communist Party on the question of the plebiscite are among those which will become clearer as time passes, and will finally enter into the textbooks of revolutionary strategy as an example of what should not be done.

In the conduct of the Central Committee of the German Communist Party, everything is wrong: the evaluation of the situation is incorrect, the immediate aim incorrectly posed, the means to achieve it incorrectly chosen. Along the way, the leadership of the party succeeded in overthrowing all those "principles" which it advocated during recent years.

On July 21, the Central Committee addressed itself to the Prussian government with the demand for democratic and social concessions, threatening otherwise to come out for the referendum. Advancing its demands, the Stalinist bureaucracy actually addressed itself to the upper stratum of the Social Democratic Party with the proposal for a united front against the fascists under certain conditions. When the Social Democracy rejected the proposed conditions, the Stalinists formed a united front with the fascists against the Social Democracy. This means that the policy of the united front is conducted not only "from below" but also "from above." It means that Thaelmann is permitted to address himself to Braun and Severing I with an "open letter" on the joint defense of democracy and social legislation from Hitler's bands. In this manner these people, without even noticing what they were doing, threw overboard their metaphysics on the united front "only from below," by means of the most stupid and most scandalous experiment of the united front only from the top, unexpectedly for the masses and against their will.

If the Social Democracy is a variety of fascism, then how can one officially make a demand to social fascists for a joint defense of democracy? Once on the road of the referendum, the party bureaucracy did not put any conditions to the National Socialists. Why? If the Social Democrats and the National Socialists are only shades of fascism, then why can conditions be put to the Social Democracy and not to

the National Socialists? Or perhaps between these two "varieties" there exist certain very important qualitative differences as regards the social base and the method of deceiving the masses? But then, do not call both of them fascists, because names in politics serve in order to differentiate and not in order to throw everything into the same heap.

Is it true, however, that Thaelmann entered a united front with Hitler? The Communist bureaucracy called the referendum of Thaelmann "red," in contrast to the black or brown plebiscite of Hitler. That the matter is concerned with two mortally hostile parties is naturally beyond doubt, and all the falsehoods of the Social Democracy will not compel the workers to forget it. But a fact remains a fact: in a certain campaign, the Stalinist bureaucracy involved the revolutionary workers in a united front with the National Socialists against the Social Democracy. If one could designate his party adherence on the ballots, then the referendum would at least have the justification (in the given instance, absolutely insufficient politically) that it would have permitted a count of its forces and by that itself, separate them from the forces of fascism. But German "democracy" did not trouble in its time to provide for participants in referendums the right to designate their parties. All the voters are fused into one inseparable mass which, on a definite question, gives one and the same answer. Within the limits of this question, the united front with the fascists is an indubitable fact.

Thus, between midnight and dawn everything appeared to be turned on its head.

"UNITED FRONT," BUT WITH WHOM?

What political aim did the leadership of the Communist Party pursue with its turn? The more you read the official documents and speeches of the leaders, the less you understand this aim. The Prussian government we are told, is paving the road for fascism. This is absolutely correct. The federal government of Bruening, [2] the leaders of the Communist Party add, has actually been fascisizing the republic and has already accomplished a lot of work on this road. Absolutely correct, we reply to this. "But you see, without the Prussian Braun, the federal Bruening cannot maintain himself!" the Stalinists say. This, too, is correct, we reply. Up to this point we are in complete accord. But what political conclusions flow from this? We have not the slightest ground for supporting Braun's government, for taking even a shadow of responsibility for it before the masses, or even for weakening by one iota our political struggle against the government of Bruening and its Prussian agency. But we have still less ground for helping the fascists to replace the government of Bruening-Braun. For, if we quite justly accuse the Social Democracy of paving the road for fascism, then our own task can least of all consist of shortening this road for fascism.

The circular letter of the Central Committee of the German Communist Party to all units on July 27 most mercilessly lays bare the inconsistency of the leadership, because it is the product of a collective elaboration of the question. The essence of the letter, liberated from confusion and contradictions, is reduced to this, that in the final analysis, there is no difference between the Social Democrats and the fascists, that is, that there is no difference between the enemy who deceives and betrays the workers, taking advantage of their patience, and the enemy who simply wants to kill them off. Sensing the absurdity of such an identification, the authors of the circular letter suddenly make a turn and present the red referendum as the "decisive application of the policy of united front from below [!] with respect to the Social Democratic, the Christian, and the nonparty workers." In what way the intervention in the plebiscite alongside of the fascists, against the Social Democracy and the party of the Center, [3] is an application of the policy of the united front towards the Social Democratic and Christian workers, will

not be understood by any proletarian mind. The reference is evidently to those Social Democratic workers who, breaking from their party, participated in the referendum. How many of them? By the policy of the united front, one should at least understand a common action, not with the workers who have left the Social Democracy, but with those who remain in its ranks. Unfortunately, there are still a great number of them.

THE QUESTION OF THE RELATION OF FORCES

The only phrase in Thaelmann's speech of July 24 that resembles a serious motivation of the turn is as follows: "The red referendum, by utilizing the possibilities of legal, parliamentary mass action, represents a step forward in the direction of the extraparliamentary mobilization of the masses." If these words have any sense at all, it is only the following: we take the parliamentary vote as the point of departure for our general revolutionary offensive, in order to overthrow the government of the Social Democracy and the parties of the golden mean allied with it by legal means, and in order afterwards, by the pressure of the revolutionary masses, to overthrow fascism, which is attempting to become the heir to the Social Democracy. In other words: the Prussian referendum only plays the role of a springboard for the revolutionary leap. Yes, as a springboard, the plebiscite would have been fully justified. Whether the fascists vote together with the Communists or not would lose all significance at the moment when the proletariat, by its pressure, overthrows the fascists and takes the power into its own hands. For a springboard, one can make use of any planks, the plank of the referendum included. Only, the possibility of actually making the jump must be there, not in words but in deeds. The problem is consequently reduced to the relationship of forces. To come out into the streets with the slogan "Down with the Bruening-Braun government" at a time when, according to the relationship of forces, it can only be replaced by a government of Hitler-Hugenberg, [4] is the sheerest adventurism. The same slogan, however, assumes an altogether different meaning if it becomes an introduction to the direct struggle of the proletariat itself for power. In the first instance, the Communists would appear in the eyes of the masses as the aids of reaction; but in the second instance, the question of how the fascists voted before they were crushed by the proletariat would have lost all political significance.

Consequently, we consider the coincidence of voting with the fascists not from the point of view of some abstract principle, but from the point of view of the actual struggle of the classes for power, and the relationship of forces at a given stage of this struggle.

LET US LOOK BACK AT THE RUSSIAN EXPERIENCE

It may be regarded as incontestable that at the moment of the proletarian uprising, the difference between the Social Democratic bureaucracy and the fascists will actually be reduced to a minimum, if not to zero. In the October days, the Russian Mensheviks and SRs fought against the proletariat hand in hand with the Cadets, Kornilovists, and monarchists. [5] The Bolsheviks left the preparliament in October and went into the streets to call the masses to the armed uprising. If, simultaneously with the Bolsheviks, some kind of a monarchist group, let us say, had also left the preparliament in those days, this would not have had any political significance because the monarchists were overthrown together with the democracy.

The party came to the October uprising, however, through a series of stages. At the time of the April 1917 demonstration, a section of the Bolsheviks brought out the slogan: "Down with the provisional government" The Central Committee immediately straightened out the ultraleftists. Of course, we should popularize the necessity of overthrowing the provisional government; but to call the workers into the streets under that slogan -this we cannot do, for we ourselves are a minority in the working class. If we

overthrow the provisional government under these conditions, we will not be able to take its place, and consequently we will help the counterrevolution. We must patiently explain to the masses the antipopular character of this government, before the hour for Its overthrow has struck. Such was the position of the party.

During the next period, the slogan of the party ran: "Down with the capitalist ministers" This demanded of the Social Democracy that it break its coalition with the bourgeoisie. In July, we led a demonstration of workers and soldiers under the slogan "All power to the soviets!" which meant at that time: all power to the Mensheviks and SRs. The Mensheviks and the SRs together with the White Guards [6] crushed us.

Two months later, Kornilov rose against the provisional government. In the struggle against Kornilov, the Bolsheviks now occupied the frontline positions. Lenin was then in hiding. Thousands of Bolsheviks were in the Jails. The workers, soldiers, and sailors demanded the liberation of their leaders and of the Bolsheviks in general. The provisional government refused. Should not the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks have addressed an ultimatum to the government of Kerensky [7] -- free the Bolsheviks immediately and withdraw the disgraceful accusation of service to the Hohenzollerns [8] -- and, in the event of Kerensky's refusal, have refused to fight against Kornilov? This is probably how the Central Committee of Thaelmann-Remmele-Neumann [9] would have acted. But this is not how the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks acted. Lenin wrote at the time: "It would have been the most profound error to think that the revolutionary proletariat is capable, so to speak, out of "revenge" upon the SRs and Mensheviks for their support of the crushing of the Bolsheviks, the assassinations on the front, and the disarming of the workers, of refusing" to support them against the counterrevolution. Such a way of putting the question would have meant first of all, the carrying over of petty-bourgeois conceptions of morality into the proletariat (because for the good of the cause the proletariat will always support not only the vacillating petty bourgeoisie but also the big bourgeoisie); in the second place, it would have been -- and this is most important -- a petty-bourgeois attempt to cast a shadow, by "moralizing," over the political essence of the matter."

If we had not repulsed Kornilov in August, and had thereby facilitated his victory, he would first have annihilated the flower of the working class and consequently would have hindered our winning victory two months later over the conciliators and punishing them -- not in words but in deeds -- for their historic crimes.

It is precisely "petty-bourgeois moralizing" which Thaelmann & Co. engage in when, in justification of their own turn, they begin to enumerate the countless infamies committed by the leaders of the Social Democracy.

WITH BLOWN-OUT LANTERNS

Historical analogies are only analogies. It is not possible to speak of identical conditions and tasks. But in the relative language of analogies, we may ask: at the time of the referendum in Germany, was the question that of defense against the Kornilov danger or, indeed, of the overthrow of the whole bourgeois order by the proletariat? This question is not decided by bare principles, nor by polemical formulas, but by the relation of forces. With what care and conscientiousness the Bolsheviks studied, counted, and measured the relation of forces at every new stage of the revolution! Did the leadership of the German Communist Party attempt, when it entered into the struggle, to draw the preliminary balance of the struggling forces? Neither in articles nor in speeches do we find such a balance. Like their teacher Stalin, the Berlin pupils conduct politics with blown-out lanterns.

His considerations on the decisive question of the relation of forces are reduced by Thaelmann to two or three general phrases. "We no longer live in 1923," he said in his report; "the Communist Party is at present the party of many millions, which grows at a furious pace." And this is all! Thaelmann could not show more clearly the extent to which an understanding of the difference between the situations of 1923 and 1931 is foreign to him! Then, the Social Democracy was breaking up into bits. The workers who had not successfully broken away from the ranks of the Social Democracy turned their eyes hopefully in the direction of the Communist Party. Then, fascism represented to a far greater degree a scarecrow in the garden of the bourgeoisie, rather than a serious political reality. The influence of the Communist Party on the trade unions and the factory committees was incomparably greater in 1923 than it is today. The factory committees were then actually carrying out the basic functions of soviets. The Social Democratic bureaucracy in the trade unions was losing ground from under its feet every day.

The fact that the situation in 1923 was not utilized by the opportunist leadership of the Comintern and the German Communist Party still lives in the consciousness of the classes and the parties, and in the mutual relationships between them. The Communist Party, Thaelmann says, is the party of millions. We are very glad of that; we are very proud of it. But we do not forget that the Social Democracy still remains the party of millions. We do not forget that thanks to the horrible chain of epigone mistakes of 1923-1931, the present Social Democracy displays far greater powers of resistance than the Social Democracy of 1923. We do not forget that present-day fascism, nursed and reared by the betrayals of the Social Democracy and the mistakes of the Stalinist bureaucracy, presents a tremendous obstacle on the road to the seizure of power by the proletariat. The Communist Party is the party of millions. But thanks to the former strategy of the "third period," the period of concentrated bureaucratic stupidity, the Communist Party is still extremely weak today in the trade unions and in the factory committees. The struggle for power cannot be led by merely leaning on the votes of a referendum. One must have support in the factories, in the shops, in the trade unions, and in the factory committees. All this is forgotten by Thaelmann, who substitutes strong words for an analysis of the situation.

To contend that in July-August 1931 the German Communist Party was so powerful that it could enter into an open struggle with bourgeois society, as embodied in both its flanks, the Social Democracy and fascism, could be done only by a man who has fallen from the moon. The party bureaucracy itself does not think so. If it resorts to such an argument it is only because the plebiscite failed and consequently it was not put to the further test. It is precisely in this irresponsibility, in this blindness, in this unscrupulous pursuit of effects, that the adventurist half of the soul of Stalinist centrism finds its expression!

"THE PEOPLE'S REVOLUTION" INSTEAD OF THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

Such a "sudden," at first sight, zigzag (of July 21) did not at all fall like a thunderbolt from the clear sky, but was prepared by the whole course of the past period. That the German Communist Party is governed by a sincere and burning aspiration to conquer the fascists, to break the masses away from their influence, to overthrow fascism and to crush it -- of this, it is understood, there can be no doubt. But the trouble is that as time goes on, the Stalinist bureaucracy strives more and more to act against fascism with its own weapon, borrowing the colors of its political palette, and trying to shout it at the auction of patriotism. These are not the methods of principled class politics but the methods of petty-bourgeois competition.

It is difficult for one to imagine a more shameful capitulation in principle than the fact that the Stalinist

bureaucracy has substituted for the slogan of the proletarian revolution the slogan of the people's revolution. No cunning stratagems, no play on quotations, no historical falsifications, will alter the fact that this is a betrayal in principle of Marxism, with the object of the very best imitation of fascist charlatanism. I am compelled here to repeat what I wrote on this question several months ago: "It is understood that every great revolution is a people's or a national revolution, in the sense that it unites around the revolutionary class all the virile and creative forces of the nation and reconstructs the nation around a new core. But this is not a slogan, it is a sociological description of the revolution, which requires, moreover, precise and concrete definition. As a slogan, it is inane and charlatanism, market competition with the fascists, paid for at the price of injecting confusion into the minds of the workers.... The fascist Strasser says 95 percent of the people are interested in the revolution, consequently it is not a class revolution but a people's revolution. Thaelmann sings in chorus. In reality, the worker-Communist should say to the fascist worker: of course, 95 percent of the population, if not 98 percent is exploited by finance capital. But this exploitation is organized hierarchically: there are exploiters, there are subexploiters, sub-subexploiters, etc. Only thanks to this hierarchy do the superexploiters keep in subjection the majority of the nation. In order that the nation should indeed be able to reconstruct itself around a new class core, it must be reconstructed ideologically and this can be achieved only if the proletariat does not dissolve itself into the "people," into the "nation," but on the contrary develops a program of its proletarian revolution and compels the petty bourgeoisie to choose between two regimes. The slogan of the people's revolution lulls the petty bourgeoisie as well as the broad masses of the workers, reconciles them to the bourgeois-hierarchical structure of the "people" and retards their liberation. But under present conditions in Germany, the slogan of a "people's revolution" wipes away the ideological demarcation between Marxism and fascism and reconciles part of the workers and the petty bourgeoisie to the ideology of fascism, allowing them to think that they are not compelled to make a choice, because in both camps it is all a matter of a people's revolution."

"PEOPLE'S REVOLUTION" AS A METHOD OF "NATIONAL LIBERATION"

Ideas have their own logic. The people's revolution is put forth as a subordinate method of "national liberation." Such a statement of the question cleared a way to the party for purely chauvinistic tendencies. It is understood that there is nothing bad about the fact that despairing patriots approach the party of the proletariat from the camp of petty-bourgeois chauvinism: different elements come to Communism along different roads and paths. Sincere and honest elements -- along with inveterate careerists and unscrupulous failures -- are undoubtedly to be found in the ranks of those officers of the White Guard and Black Hundreds [10] who in recent months apparently began to turn their faces toward Communism. The party, of course, could utilize even such individual metamorphoses as a subsidiary method for the demoralization of the fascist camp. The crime of the Stalinist bureaucracy--yes, an outright crime--consists, however, of the fact that it solidarizes itself with these elements, identifies their voice with the voice of the party, refuses to expose their nationalistic and militaristic tendencies, transforming the thoroughly petty-bourgeois, reactionary-utopian, and chauvinist pamphlet by Scheringer [11] into a new testament of the revolutionary proletariat. From this base competition with fascism there suddenly arose, on the face of it, the July 21 decision: you have a people's revolution and we have one, too; you have national liberation as the highest criterion, and we have the same; you have a war against Western capitalism and we promise the same; you have a plebiscite, and we have a plebiscite, still better, a "red" one through and through.

The fact is that the former revolutionary worker Thaelmann today strives with all his strength not to

disgrace himself in front of Count Stenbock-Fermor. [12] The report of the meeting of party workers at which Thaelmann proclaimed the turn towards the plebiscite is printed in Die Rote Fahne under the pretentious title, "Under the Banner of Marxism." Nevertheless, at the most important place in his conclusion, Thaelmann put the idea that "Germany is today a ball in the hands of the Entente." It is in consequence primarily a matter of national liberation. But in a certain sense, France and Italy also, and even England, are "balls" in the hands of the United States. The dependence of Europe upon America, which has once more been revealed so clearly in connection with Hoover's proposal [13] (tomorrow this dependence will be revealed still more sharply and brutally), has a far deeper significance for the development of the European revolution than the dependence of Germany upon the Entente. [14] This is why -- by the way -- the slogan of the Soviet United States of Europe, and not the single bare slogan, "Down with the Versailles Peace," is the proletarian answer to the convulsions of the European continent.

But all these questions nevertheless occupy second place. Our policy is determined not by the fact that Germany is a "ball" in the hands of the Entente, but primarily by the fact that the German proletariat which is split up, powerless, and oppressed, is a ball in the hands of the German bourgeoisie. "The main enemy is at home!" Karl Liebknecht [15] taught at one time. Or perhaps you have forgotten this, friends? Or perhaps this teaching is no longer any good? For Thaelmann, it is very obviously antiquated; Scheringer is substituted for Liebknecht. This is why the title "Under the Banner of Marxism" rings with such bitter irony!

THE SCHOOL OF BUREAUCRATIC CENTRISM AS THE SCHOOL OF CAPITULATION

Several years ago, the Left Opposition warned that the "truly Russian" theory of socialism in one country would inevitably lead to the development of social-patriotic tendencies in other sections of the Comintern. At that time, it seemed to be a fantasy, a malicious fiction, a "slander." But ideas have not only their own logic, but also their explosive force. The German Communist Party, in a brief period, has been drawn into the sphere of social patriotism before our very eyes, that is, into those moods and slogans on the mortal hostility towards which the Comintern was founded. Is it not startling? No, it is only a natural consequence!

The method of ideological imitation of the opponent and of the class enemy -- a method which is thoroughly contradictory to the theory and the psychology of Bolshevism -- flows quite organically from the essence of centrism, from its unprincipledness, inconsistency, ideological hollowness. Thus, for several years the Stalinist bureaucracy carried out a Thermidorean policy in order to cut the ground from under the Thermidoreans. [16] Having been frightened by the Left Opposition, the Stalinist bureaucracy started to imitate the left platform bit by bit. In order to tear the English workers from the domination of trade unionism, the Stalinists conducted a trade-unionist instead of a Marxist policy. In order to help the Chinese workers and peasants to take an independent road, the Stalinists drove them into the bourgeois Kuomintang. This list can be continued endlessly. In big as well as in small questions, we see one and the same spirit of mimicry, constant imitation of the opponent, a striving to utilize not their own weapons -- which, alas! they do not possess -- but weapons stolen from the arsenal of the enemy.

The present party regime acts in the same direction. We have written and spoken more than once that the absolutism of the apparatus, demoralizing the leading stratum of the Comintern, humiliating the advanced workers and depriving them of individuality, crushing and distorting revolutionary character, inevitably weakens the proletarian vanguard in the face of the enemy. Whoever bows his head

submissively before every command from above, is good for nothing as a revolutionary fighter!

The centrist functionaries were Zinovievists under Zinoviev, Bukharinists under Bukharin, Stalinists and Molotovists when Stalin's and Molotov's time came. They even bowed their heads before Manuilsky, Kuusinen, and Lozovsky. [17] At each stage that passed, they repeated the words, the intonations, and the gestures of the next "leader"; according to command, they rejected today what they swore by yesterday and, putting two fingers in the mouth, whistled at the retired chief whom they had borne on their arms only yesterday. Under this disastrous regime, revolutionary courage is emasculated, theoretical consciousness is laid waste, the backbone is softened. Only bureaucrats who have gone through the Zinovievist-Stalinist school could so easily substitute the people's revolution for the proletarian and, having proclaimed the Bolshevik-Leninists as renegades, raise upon their shoulders chauvinists of the Scheringer type.

"REVOLUTIONARY WAR" AND PACIFISM

The Scheringers and the Stenbock-Fermors look favorably upon the cause of the Communist Party as the direct continuation of the Hohenzollern war. To them, the victims of the hideous imperialist slaughter remain heroes who have fallen for the freedom of the German people. They are ready to call a new war for Alsace-Lorraine and Eastern Prussia [18] a "revolutionary" war. They agree to accept -- for the time being, in words -- the "people's revolution," if it can serve as a means of mobilizing the workers for their "revolutionary" war. Their whole program lies in the Idea of revanche (revenge): If tomorrow it will seem to them that the same aim can be achieved by another road, they will shoot the revolutionary proletariat in the back. This should not be slurred over, but exposed. The vigilance of the workers should not be lulled, but aroused. How does the party act?

In the Communist Fanfare of August 1, in the very heat of the agitation for the red referendum, along with the picture of Scheringer, is printed one of his new apostolic messages. Here is what is said there verbatim: "The cause of the dead of the world war, who have given their lives for a free Germany, is betrayed by everyone who comes out today against the people's revolution, against the revolutionary war of liberation." You do not believe your own eyes, reading these revelations in the pages of a press calling itself Communist. And all this is covered up with the names of Liebknecht and Lenin! What a long whip Lenin would have taken into his hands for the polemical castigation of such Communism. And he would not stop at polemical articles. He would press for the convocation of a special international congress, in order mercilessly to purge the ranks of the proletarian vanguard of the gangrene of chauvinism.

"We are not pacifists," the Thaelmanns, Remmeles, and others retort proudly. "We are for revolutionary war in principle." As proof, they are prepared to produce some quotations from Marx and Lenin, selected for them in Moscow by some ignorant "Red Professor." One might really think that Marx and Lenin were the spokesmen of national wars and not of proletarian revolutions! As if the conception of revolutionary war of Marx and Lenin has anything in common with the nationalist ideology of the fascist officers and the centrist corporals. By the cheap phrase of revolutionary war, the Stalinist bureaucracy attracts dozens of adventurists, but repulses hundreds of thousands, and millions of Social Democratic, Christian, and nonparty workers.

"This means that you recommend to us to imitate the pacifism of the Social Democracy?" some particularly profound theoretician of the new course will object. No, we are least of all inclined to imitation, even of the moods of the working class; but we must take them into consideration. Only by correctly estimating the moods of the broad masses of the proletariat can they be brought to the

revolution. But the bureaucracy, imitating the phraseology of petty-bourgeois nationalism, ignores the actual moods of the workers who do not want war, who cannot want it, and who are repelled by the military fanfaronades of the new firm: Thaelmann, Scheringer, Count Stenbock-Fermor, Heinz Neumann & Co.

Marxism, of course, cannot fail to take into consideration the possibility of revolutionary war in the event that the proletariat seizes power. But this is far removed from converting a historical probability, which may be forced upon us by the course of events after the seizure of power, into a fighting political slogan prior to the seizure of power. A revolutionary war, as something forced upon us under certain conditions, as a consequence of the proletarian victory, is one thing. A "people's" revolution, as a means for revolutionary war, is something altogether different even directly opposite.

In spite of the recognition in principle of revolutionary war, the government of Soviet Russia signed, as is known, the most onerous Brest-Litovsk peace. [19] Why? Because the peasants and the workers, with the exception of a small advanced section, did not want war. Later, the same peasants and workers heroically defended the Soviet revolution from innumerable enemies. But when we attempted to transform the harsh defensive war forced upon us by Pilsudski [20] into an offensive war, we suffered a defeat and this mistake, which arose from an incorrect estimation of the forces, struck very heavily at the development of the revolution.

The Red Army has been in existence for fourteen years. "We are not pacifists." But why does the Soviet government declare on every occasion its peaceful policy? Why does it propose disarmament and conclude nonaggression pacts? Why doesn't it set the Red Army into motion as a weapon of the world proletarian revolution? Obviously, it is not enough to be for revolutionary war in principle. One must have a head on one's shoulders besides. One must take into consideration the circumstances, the relationship of forces, and the moods of the masses.

If taking into consideration the moods of the workers and toilers in general is imperative for a workers' government that has a powerful state apparatus of compulsion in its hands, then a revolutionary party must be all the more attentive, since it can act only by convincing and not by compelling. The revolution, to us, is not a subordinate means for war against the West but on the contrary a means for avoiding wars, in order to end them once and for all. We fight the Social Democracy not by ridiculing its striving for peace, which is inherent in every toiler, but by revealing the falsity of its pacifism, because capitalist society, which is rescued every day by the Social Democracy, is inconceivable without war. The "national liberation" of Germany lies, to our mind, not in a war with the West, but in a proletarian revolution embracing Central as well as Western Europe, and uniting it with Eastern Europe in the form of a Soviet United States. Only such a statement of the question can unite the working class and make it a center of attraction for the despairing petty-bourgeois masses. In order for the proletariat to be able to dictate its will to modern society, its party must not be ashamed of being a proletarian party and of speaking its own language, not the language of national revanche, but the language of international revolution.

HOW MARXISTS OUGHT TO THINK

The red referendum did not fall from the skies: it grew out of an advanced ideological degeneration of the party. But because of this it does not cease to be the most malicious adventure imaginable. The referendum did not at all become the point of departure for a revolutionary struggle for power. It remained fully within the framework of a subsidiary parliamentary maneuver. With its aid, the party

succeeded in inflicting upon itself a multiple defeat. Having strengthened the Social Democracy and consequently the Bruening government, having covered up the defeat of the fascists, and having repelled the Social Democratic workers and a considerable portion of its own electorate, the party became, on the day after the referendum, considerably weaker than it had been on the eve of it. It was impossible to render better service to German and world capitalism.

Capitalist society, particularly in Germany, has been on the eve of collapse several times in the last decade and a half; but each time it emerged from the catastrophe. Economic and social prerequisites for the revolution are insufficient by themselves. The political prerequisites are needed, that is, a relation of forces that, if it does not assure victory in advance -- there are no such situations in history -- at least makes it possible and probable. Strategic calculation, boldness, resolution, later transform the probable into the reality. But no strategy can turn the impossible into the possible.

Instead of general phrases about the deepening of the crisis and the "changing situation," the Central Committee was duty-bound to point out precisely what the relation of forces is at the present time in the German proletariat, in the trade unions, in the factory committees what connections the party has with the agricultural workers, etc. These data are open to precise investigation and are not a secret. If Thaelmann had the courage openly to enumerate and weigh all the elements of the political situation, he would be compelled to come to the conclusion: in spite of the monstrous crisis of the capitalist system and the considerable growth of Communism in the past period, the party is still too weak to seek to force the revolutionary solution. On the contrary, it is the fascists who strive towards this aim. All the bourgeois parties are ready to assist them in this, the Social Democracy included. For they all fear the Communists more than they do the fascists. With the aid of the Prussian plebiscite, the National Socialists want to provoke the collapse of the extremely unstable state balance, so as to force the vacillating strata of the bourgeoisie to support them in the cause of a bloody judgment over the workers. For us to assist the fascists would be the greatest stupidity. This is why we are against the fascist plebiscite. This is how Thaelmann should have concluded his report, if he had a grain of Marxist conscience left.

After this, it would have been in order to start as broad and open a discussion as possible, because it is necessary for the leaders, even for such infallible ones as Heinz Neumann and Remmele, to listen attentively at every turn to the voice of the masses. It is necessary to listen not only to the official words which a Communist says sometimes, but also to those deeper, more popular thoughts which are hidden beneath his words. It is necessary not to command workers, but to be able to learn from them.

If the discussion had been an open one, then probably one of the participants would have made a speech something like this: "Thaelmann is right when he demands that regardless of the undoubted changes in the situation, we must not because of the relation of forces, try to impose a revolutionary solution. But precisely for that reason the most resolute extreme enemies are pushing for the outbreak, as we see. Are we able, in such a situation, to gain the time we need to effect preliminary changes in the relation of forces, that is, to snatch the main proletarian masses from the influence of the Social Democracy and so compel the despairing lower strata of the petty bourgeoisie to turn their faces to the proletariat and their backs to fascism? Very well, if it turns out this way. But what if the fascists, against our will, drive things to an uprising in the near future? Will the proletarian revolution then be condemned again to a grave defeat?"

Then Thaelmann, if he were a Marxist would have answered roughly thus: "Of course the choice of the moment of decisive struggle depends not only on us, but also on our enemies. We are in complete

agreement that the task of our strategy at the present moment is to make it difficult, not easy, for our enemies to force an outbreak. But if our enemies nevertheless declare war on us, we must of course accept, because there is not and there cannot be a heavier, more destructive, more annihilating, more demoralizing defeat than the surrender of great historical positions without a struggle. If the fascists take the initiative for an outbreak on themselves -- if it is clear to the popular masses -- under present conditions, they will push to our side the broad layers of the toiling masses. In that case, we would have a much greater chance of winning victory the more clearly we show and prove today to the working millions that we do not at all intend to accomplish revolutions without them and against them. We must therefore talk openly to the Social Democratic, Christian, and nonparty workers: 'The fascists, a small minority, wish to overthrow the present government in order to seize power. We Communists think the present government is the enemy of the proletariat, but this government supports itself on your confidence and your votes; we wish to overthrow this government by means of an alliance with you, not by means of an alliance with the fascists against you. If the fascists attempt to organize an uprising, then we Communists will fight with you until the last drop of blood-not in order to defend the government of Braun-Bruening, but in order to save the flower of the proletariat from being strangled and annihilated, to save the workers' organizations and the workers' press, not only our Communist press, but also your Social Democratic press. We are ready together with you to defend any workers' home whatsoever, any printing plant of a workers' press, from the attacks of the fascists. And we call on you to pledge yourselves to come to our aid in case of a threat to our organizations. We propose a united front of the working class against the fascists. The more firmly and persistently we carry out this policy, applying it to all questions, the more difficult it will be for the fascists to catch us unawares, and the smaller will be their chances of defeating us in open struggle.'" Thus would have answered our hypothetical Thaelmann.

But here Heinz Neumann, the orator permeated through and through with great ideas, takes the floor. "Nothing will come of such a policy anyway," he says. "The Social Democratic leaders will say to the workers, 'Do not believe the Communists, they are not at all concerned about saving the workers' organizations, but wish only to seize power; they consider us to be social fascists and they do not make any distinction between us and the Nationalists.'" That is why the policy that Thaelmann proposes would simply make us look ridiculous in the eyes of the Social Democratic workers."

To this Thaelmann should have had to answer: "Calling the Social Democrats fascists is certainly a stupidity which confuses us at every critical moment and which prevents us from finding a way to the Social Democratic workers. To renounce this stupidity is the best thing we can do. As to the accusation that under the pretense of defense of the working class and its organizations, we desire simply to seize power, we will say to the Social Democratic workers: yes, we Communists strive to conquer power, but for that we require the unconditional majority of the working class. The attempt to seize power supporting oneself on a minority is a contemptible adventure with which we have nothing in common. We are not able to force the majority of the workers to follow us; we can only try to convince them. If the fascists should defeat the working class, then it would be impossible even to speak of the conquest of power by the Communists. To protect the working class and its organizations from the fascists means we must assure ourselves of the possibility of convincing the working class and leading it behind us. We are unable, therefore, to come to power otherwise than by protecting, if necessary with arms in hand, all the elements of workers' democracy in the capitalist state."

To that Thaelmann might have added: "In order to win the firm, indestructible confidence of the majority of the workers, we must above all beware of throwing dust in their eyes, exaggerating our forces, closing our eyes to facts, or, still worse, distorting them. It is necessary to state what is. We shall not deceive our

enemies, who have thousands of agencies for testing. By deceiving the workers, we deceive ourselves. By pretending to be very strong, we only weaken ourselves. Therein, friends, lies no "bad faith," no "pessimism." Why should we be pessimists? Before us there are gigantic possibilities. For us there is an unlimited future. The fate of Germany, the fate of Europe, the fate of the whole world depends on us. But precisely he who firmly believes in the revolutionary future has no need of illusions. Marxist realism is a prerequisite of revolutionary optimism."

Thus would Thaelmann have answered if he were a Marxist. But, unfortunately, he is not a Marxist.

WHY WAS THE PARTY SILENT?

But how then could the party have remained silent? The report of Thaelmann, signifying a turn of 180 degrees on the question of the referendum, was accepted without discussion. Thus it was proposed from above; but proposed means ordered. AR the accounts of Die Rote Fahne report that at all meetings of the party, the referendum was adopted "unanimously." This unanimity is represented as a sign of the particular strength of the party. When and where has there yet been in the history of the revolutionary movement such dumb "monolithism"? The Thaelmanns and the Remmeles swear by Bolshevism. But the whole history of Bolshevism is the history of intense internal struggle through which the party gained its viewpoints and hammered out its methods. The chronicle of the year 1917, the greatest year in the history of the party, is full of intense internal struggles, as is also the history of the first five years after the conquest of power; despite this -- not one split, not one major expulsion for political motives. But you see, after all, at the head of the Bolshevik Party there stood leaders of another stature, another stamp, and another authority than the Thaelmanns, Remmeles, and Neumanns. Whence then this terrible "monolithism" of today, this destructive unanimity, which transforms each turn of the unfortunate leaders into absolute law for a gigantic party?

"No discussions!" Because, as Die Rote Fahne explains, "in this situation we need deeds, not speeches." Repulsive hypocrisy! The party must accomplish "deeds," but renounce participating in discussing them beforehand. And with what deed are we concerned at present? With the question of placing a little cross in a square on an official paper; and in a count of little proletarian crosses, moreover, there is not even the possibility of ascertaining whether they are not fascist crosses. Without doubts, without consideration, without questions, without even anxiety in your eyes, accept the new wild jump of the leaders designated by Providence, otherwise you are -- a renegade, a counterrevolutionary! This is the ultimatum that the international Stalinist bureaucracy holds as a revolver against the temple of each militant.

Outwardly, it appears that the masses are reconciled to this regime, and that everything is going beautifully. But no! The masses are not at all clay from which one can model whatever one wishes. They respond, in their own way, slowly, but very impressively, to the blunders and absurdities of the leadership. They resist the "third period" theory in their own way when they boycott "red days" without number. They abandon the red trade unions in France when they cannot oppose the experiments of Lozovsky-Monmousseau [21] in a normal way. Not accepting the "idea" of the red referendum, hundreds of thousands and millions of workers avoid participation in it. This is retribution for the crimes of the centrist bureaucracy, which abjectly imitates the class enemy, but makes up for it by gripping its own party firmly by the throat.

WHAT DOES STALIN SAY?

Did Stalin actually sanction the new zigzag in advance? No one knows that, just as no one knows Stalin's opinions on the Spanish revolution. Stalin remains silent. When more modest leaders, beginning with Lenin, wished to exert influence on the policy of a brother party, they made speeches or wrote articles. The point was that they had something to say. Stalin has nothing to say. He uses cunning with the historical process just as he uses cunning with individual people. He does not consider how to help the German or Spanish proletariat take a step forward, but how to guarantee for himself in advance a political retreat.

An unsurpassed example of the duality of Stalin on the basic questions of the world revolution, is his attitude towards the German events in the year 1923. Let us recall what he wrote to Zinoviev and Bukharin in August of the same year. "Ought the Communists to strive (at the present stage) to seize power without the Social Democrats? Are they ripe yet for that? In my opinion, that is the question. At the time of taking power in Russia we had such reserves as (1) peace, (2) land to the peasants, (3) the support of the enormous majority of the working class, (4) sympathy of the peasantry. At present, the German Communists possess no such thing. It is true that they have as their neighbor the Soviet country, which we had not, but what can we do for them at the present moment? If, at present, the power of Germany would fall, so to speak, and the Communists were to seize it, they would collapse with a crash. That is "in the best case." But in the worst case -- they would smash into smithereens and be thrust

matter is here reduced to a simple vote of no confidence. But why, then, in such a case, did not the Communists take the initiative in the referendum; why did they struggle for several months against this initiative; and why on July 21 did they suddenly kneel down before it? The argument of Pravda is a belated argument of parliamentary cretinism, and nothing else.

On August 11, after the referendum, Pravda changed Its argumentation: "The purpose of participation in the referendum consisted for the party in the extrapartliamentary mobilization of the masses." But was it not for precisely that reason, for the extraparlimentary mobilization of the masses, that the day of August 1 was assigned? [22] We shall not now stop for a criticism of calendar "red days." But on the first of August, the Communist Party mobilized the masses under its own slogans and under its own leadership. For what reason, then, was a new mobilization needed a week later, such that the mobilized do not see one another, that no one of them is able to calculate their numbers, that neither they themselves, nor their friends, nor their enemies, are able to distinguish them from their deadly enemies?

On the following day, in the issue of August 12, Pravda declares no more, no less, that "the results of the voting signified... the greatest blow of all that the working class has yet dealt the Social Democracy." We will not produce the statistics of the referendum. They are known to all (except to the readers of Pravda), and they strike the idiotic and shameful boasting of Pravda in the face. To lie to the workers, to throw dust in their eyes, these people consider to be in the order of things.

Official Leninism is crushed and trampled under the heels of bureaucratic epigonism. But unofficial Leninism lives. Let not the unbridled functionaries think that all will pass over for them with impunity. The scientifically founded ideas of the proletarian revolution are stronger than the apparatus, stronger than any amount of money, stronger than the fiercest repression. In the matter of apparatus, money, and repression, our class enemies are incomparably stronger than the present Stalinist bureaucracy. But nevertheless, on the territory of Russia, we conquered them. We demonstrated that it was possible to conquer them. The revolutionary proletariat shall conquer them everywhere. For that it needs a correct policy. In the struggle against the Stalinist apparatus, the proletarian vanguard will win its right to carry on the policy of Marx and Lenin.

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Leon Trotsky *GERMANY,* *THE KEY TO THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION*

by
Leon Trotsky
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It is the aim of this pamphlet to indicate, at least in its general outline, the composition of the political world situation today, as it has resulted from the fundamental contradictions of decaying capitalism, complicated and sharpened by the severe commercial, industrial, and financial crisis. The following hastily sketched reflections, far from embracing all countries and all questions, are to be the subject of serious further, collective treatment.

1. SPAIN

The Spanish revolution [1] has created the general political premises for an immediate struggle for power by the proletariat. The syndicalist traditions of the Spanish proletariat have now been revealed as one of the most important obstacles in the way of the development of the revolution. The Comintern was caught unawares by the events. The Communist Party, totally impotent at the beginning of the revolution, occupied a false position on all the fundamental questions. The Spanish experiences have shown -- let it be recalled once more -- what a frightful instrument of the disorganization of the revolutionary consciousness of the advanced workers the present Comintern leadership represents! The extraordinary delay of the proletarian vanguard lagging behind the events, the politically dispersed character of the heroic struggles of the working masses, the actual assurances of reciprocity between anarchosyndicalism and Social Democracy -- these are the fundamental political conditions that made it possible for the republican bourgeoisie, in league with the Social Democracy, to establish an apparatus of repression, and by dealing the insurgent masses blow for blow, to concentrate a considerable amount of political power in the hands of the government.

By this example, we see that fascism is not at all the only method of the bourgeoisie in its struggle against the revolutionary masses. The regime existing in Spain today corresponds best to the conception of a Kerenskiad, that is, the last (or "next-to-last") "left government, which the bourgeoisie can only set up in its struggle against the revolution. But this kind of government does not necessarily signify weakness and prostration. In the absence of a strong revolutionary party of the proletariat, a combination of semireforms, left phrases, and gestures still more to the left, and of reprisals, can prove to be of much more effective service to the bourgeoisie than fascism.

Needless to say, the Spanish revolution has not yet ended. It has not solved its most elementary tasks (the agrarian, the church, and the national questions) and is still far from having exhausted the revolutionary resources of the popular masses. More than it has already given, the bourgeois revolution will not be able to give. With regard to the proletarian revolution, the present internal situation in Spain may be

characterized as prerevolutionary, but scarcely more than that. It is quite probable that the offensive development of the Spanish revolution will take on a more or less protracted character. In this manner, the historical process opens up, as it were, a new credit account for Spanish Communism.

2. BRITAIN

The situation in Britain can likewise be termed, with a certain degree of justification, prerevolutionary, provided it is strictly agreed that a period covering several years of partial ebbs and tides can elapse between a prerevolutionary and a directly revolutionary situation. The economic situation in Britain has become extremely acute. Still, the political superstructure of this archconservative country lags extraordinarily behind the changes in the economic basis. Before resorting to new political forms and methods, all the classes of the British nation are attempting time and again to ransack the old storerooms, to turn the old clothes of their grandfathers and grandmothers inside out. The fact remains that, despite the dreadful national decline, there does not exist in Britain as yet either a revolutionary party of any significance or its antipode -- a fascist party. Thanks to these circumstances, the bourgeoisie has had the opportunity to mobilize the majority of the people under the "national" banner, that is, under the most hollow of all possible slogans. In the prerevolutionary situation, the most obtuse conservatism has acquired tremendous political predominance. It will in all probability take more than a month, perhaps more than a year, for the political superstructure to become adapted to the real economic and international situation of the country.

There is no ground for assuming that the collapse of the "national" bloc [2] -- and such a collapse is inevitable in the relatively near future -- will lead directly either to the proletarian revolution (it is a matter of course, that there can be no other revolution in Britain) or to the triumph of "fascism." On the contrary, it may be assumed with much greater probability that on her path to the revolutionary solution, Britain will go through a lengthy period of the radical-democratic and social-pacifist demagoguery of Lloyd-Georgism and of Labourism. [3] There can therefore be no doubt that Britain's historical development will grant British Communism ample time to transform itself into the genuine party of the proletariat at the moment it will be confronted with the solution. From this, however, it does not at all follow that we can afford to continue losing time with disastrous experiments and centrist zigzags. In the present world situation, time is the most precious of raw materials.

3. FRANCE

France, which the sages of the Comintern had placed a year and a half or two years ago in "the foremost ranks of the revolutionary upsurge," is in actuality the most conservative country, not only of Europe, but perhaps in the entire world. The relative stability of the capitalist regime in France has its roots, to a large extent, in the country's backwardness. The crisis has less telling effects on it than on other countries. On the financial field, Paris even attempts to vie with New York. The present financial "prosperity" of the French bourgeoisie has its direct source in the robbery of Versailles. But it is precisely the Versailles peace itself that contains the chief threat to the entire regime of the French republic. Between the size of the population, the productive forces, and the national income of France on the one hand, and her present international position on the other, there is a crying contradiction which must inevitably lead to an explosion. To maintain her short-lived hegemony, "nationalists as well as Radical Socialist France is forced to depend upon the support of the whole world's most reactionary forces, of the most archaic

forms of exploitation, of the abominable Rumanian clique, of the decadent Pilsudski regime, of the dictatorship of the Yugoslavian military; to uphold the dismemberment of the German nation (Germany and Austria), to defend the Polish corridor in East Prussia, to aid Japanese intervention in Manchuria, to spur the Japanese military clique against the USSR, to come forward as the chief enemy of the liberation movement of the colonial peoples, etc. The contradiction between France's secondary role in world economy and her immense privileges and pretensions in world politics will become more distinct every month, will heap dangers upon dangers, upset her internal stability, promote restlessness and discontent among the masses of the people, and create ever deeper political displacements. These processes will undoubtedly manifest themselves as early as the next parliamentary elections.

On the other hand, however, all indications compel us to assume that, if no great events take place outside of the country (the victory of the revolution in Germany or, contrariwise, the victory of fascism), the development of the internal relationships in France itself will, in the next period, take a relatively "normal" course, which will open up for Communism the opportunity to utilize a considerable period of preparation in which to consolidate itself prior to the advent of the prerevolutionary and revolutionary situation.

4. USA

In the United States, the most powerful capitalist country, the present crisis has laid bare frightful social contradictions with striking forcefulness. After an unprecedented period of prosperity, which amazed the whole world with its fireworks of millions and billions, the United States suddenly entered a period of unemployment for millions of people, of the most terrible physical misery for the toilers. Such a gigantic social convulsion cannot fail to leave its traces on the political development of the country. Today it is still hard to ascertain, at least from a distance, any substantial amount of radicalization in the American working masses. It may be assumed that the masses themselves have been so startled by the catastrophic economic upheaval, so stunned and crushed by unemployment or by the fear of unemployment, that they have not as yet been able to draw even the most elementary political conclusions from the calamity that has befallen them. This requires a certain amount of time. But the conclusions will be drawn. The tremendous economic crisis, which has taken on the character of a social crisis, will inevitably be converted into a crisis of the political consciousness of the American working class. It is quite possible that the revolutionary radicalization of the broadest layers of workers will reveal itself, not in the period of the greatest conjunctural decline, but on the contrary, during the turn toward revival and upswing. In either case, the present crisis will open up a new epoch in the life of the American proletariat and of the people as a whole. Serious reshufflings and clashes among the ruling parties are to be expected, as well as new attempts to create a third party, etc. With the first signs of economic recovery, the trade-union movement will acutely feel the need to tear itself from the clutches of the despicable A.F. of L. bureaucracy. At the same time, unlimited possibilities will be opened up for Communism.

In the past, America has known more than one stormy outbreak of revolutionary or semirevolutionary mass movements. Each time they died out quickly, because America each time entered a new phase of economic upswing and also because the movements themselves were characterized by crude empiricism and theoretical helplessness. These two conditions belong to the past. A new economic upswing (and one cannot consider it excluded in advance) will have to be based, not on the internal "equilibrium," but on the present chaos of world economy. American capitalism is entering an epoch of monstrous imperialism, of uninterrupted growth in armaments, of intervention in the affairs of the entire world, of

military conflicts and convulsions. On the other hand, in Communism the masses of the American proletariat have-or rather, could have, provided with a correct policy- no longer the old melange of empiricism, mysticism, and quackery, but a scientific doctrine equal to any event. These radical changes permit us to predict with certainty that the inevitable and relatively rapid revolutionary transformation of the American proletariat will not be the easily extinguishable "bonfire?" of old, but the beginning of a veritable revolutionary conflagration. In America, Communism can confidently face a great future.

5. JAPAN

The Czarist adventure in Manchuria led to the Russo-Japanese war; the war -- to the 1905 revolution. The present Japanese adventure in Manchuria can lead to revolution in Japan.

At the beginning of the century, the feudal-military regime of that country could still successfully serve the interests of the young Japanese capitalism. But in the last quarter of a century, capitalist development has brought extraordinary decomposition in the old social and political forms. Since that time, Japan has more than once been on the brink of revolution. But she lacked a strong revolutionary class to accomplish the tasks imposed on it by the developments. The Manchurian adventure may accelerate the revolutionary catastrophe for the Japanese regime.

Present-day China, no matter how enfeebled it may be by the dictatorship of the Kuomintang clique, differs greatly from the China which Japan, following the European powers, despoiled in the past. China has not the strength to drive out the Japanese expeditionary forces immediately, but the national consciousness and activity of the Chinese people have grown enormously; hundreds of thousands, millions of Chinese have gone through military training. The Chinese will rig up newer and yet newer armies. The Japanese will feel themselves besieged. The railroads will be of far greater service for war than for economic purposes. More and more new troops will have to be sent out. The Manchurian expedition spreading out will begin to exhaust Japan's economic organism, increase the discontent inside the country, sharpen the contradictions, and thereby accelerate the revolutionary crisis.

6. CHINA

In China, the necessity for a determined defense against the imperialist invasion will also provoke serious internal political consequences. The Kuomintang regime arose out of the national revolutionary mass movement which was exploited and strangled by the bourgeois militarists (with the aid of the Stalinist bureaucracy). Precisely for this reason, the present regime, shaky and full of contradictions, is incapable of initiating a revolutionary war. The necessity for a defense against the Japanese tyrants will turn more and more against the Kuomintang regime, nourishing the revolutionary sentiments of the masses. With a correct policy, the proletarian vanguard can, under these conditions, make up for all that was so tragically lost in the course of the years 1924-1927.

7. MANCHURIA

The present events in Manchuria prove particularly how naive those gentlemen were who demanded of the Soviet Union the simple return of the Chinese Eastern Railroad to China. That would have meant surrendering it voluntarily to Japan, in whose hands the railroad would have become a weapon against China as well as against the USSR. If anything at all had hitherto prevented the Japanese military cliques

from intervention in Manchuria, and if anything may still hold them within the bounds of caution today, it is the fact that the Chinese Eastern Railroad is the property of the Soviets. [4]

8. THE FAR EAST

Cannot the Manchurian adventure of the Japanese nevertheless lead to war with the USSR? It goes without saying that this is not excluded even with the wisest and most cautious policy on the part of the Soviet government. The internal contradictions of feudal-capitalistic Japan have obviously unbalanced her government. There is no lack of instigators (France). And from the historical experiences of Czarism in the Far East we know what an unbalanced military-bureaucratic monarchy is capable of.

The struggle unfolding in the Far East is, of course, carried on not for the sake of the railroads, but over the fate of all of China. In this gigantic historical struggle, the Soviet government cannot be neutral, cannot take the same position with regard to China and Japan. It is duty-bound to stand completely and fully on the side of the Chinese people. Only the unflinching loyalty of the Soviet government to the struggle for the liberation of the oppressed peoples can really protect the Soviet Union on the Eastern frontier against Japan, Britain, France, the United States.

The ways in which the Soviet government will support the struggle of the Chinese people in the coming period depend upon the concrete historical circumstances. If it would have been absurd to surrender the Chinese Eastern Railroad voluntarily to Japan earlier, then it would be just as absurd to subordinate the entire policy in the Far East to the question of the Chinese Eastern Railroad. There is much to suggest that the behavior of the Japanese military clique on this question has a consciously provocative character. The direct instigators of this provocation are the French rulers. The aim of the provocation is to tie the Soviet Union down in the East. All the more firmness and farsightedness is required on the part of the Soviet government.

The fundamental conditions of the East -- its Immense expanse, its countless human masses, its economic backwardness -- give all processes a slow, drawn out and crawling character. In any case, there is no immediate or acute threat to the existence of the Soviet Union from the Far East. During the coming period, the main events will unfold in Europe. Here great opportunities may arise, but from the same source also, great dangers threaten. For the present, only Japan has tied its hands in the Far East. The Soviet Union must for the present keep its hands free.

9. GERMANY

On this hardly peaceful political background of the world, the situation in Germany stands out sharply. The economic and political contradictions have here reached unprecedented acuteness. The solution is approaching. The moment has come when the prerevolutionary situation must be transformed into the revolutionary -- or the counterrevolutionary. On the direction in which the solution of the German crisis develops will depend not only the fate of Germany herself (and that is already a great deal), but also the fate of Europe, the destiny of the entire world, for many years to come.

Socialist construction in the USSR, the course of the Spanish revolution, the development of the prerevolutionary situation in England, the future of French imperialism, the fate of the revolutionary movement in China and India -- all this directly and immediately rests upon the question of who will be victorious in Germany in the course of the next few months: Communism or fascism?

10.

After last year's September elections to the Reichstag, the leadership of the German Communist Party declared that fascism has reached its culmination, and that henceforth it would rapidly disintegrate and clear the road for the proletarian revolution. The Communist Left Opposition (Bolshevik-Leninists) at that time ridiculed this giddy optimism. Fascism is a product of two conditions: a sharp social crisis on the one hand; the revolutionary weakness of the German proletariat on the other. The weakness of the proletariat is in turn made up of two elements: the particular historical role of the Social Democracy, this still powerful capitalist agency in the ranks of the proletariat and the inability of the centrist leadership of the Communist Party to unite the workers under the banner of the revolution.

For us, the Communist Party is the subjective factor; the Social Democracy is an objective obstacle that must be swept away. Fascism would actually fall to pieces if the Communist Party were able to unite the working class, transforming it into a powerful revolutionary magnet for all the oppressed masses of the people. But the policy of the Communist Party since the September elections has only aggravated its inconsistencies: the empty talk of "social fascism," the flirtations with chauvinism, the imitation of genuine fascism for the purpose of petty market competition with it, the criminal adventurism of the "red referendum" -- all this prevents the Communist Party from becoming the leader of the proletariat and of the people. During the last few months it has brought under its banner only those new elements whom the great crisis has almost forcibly pushed into its ranks. Despite the disastrous political conditions existing for it, the Social Democracy has been able, thanks to the aid of the Communist Party, to retain the great bulk of its following and has up to the present escaped with considerable, to be sure, but nevertheless only secondary losses. Insofar as the fascists are concerned, despite the recent bragging of Thaelmann, Remmele, and others, and in complete conformity with the prognosis of the Bolshevik-Leninists, they have taken a great leap forward since September of last year. The Comintern leadership has been unable either to foresee or to forestall anything. It can only register the defeats. Its resolutions and other documents are -- alas! -- only snapshots of the rear end of the historical process.

11.

The decisive hour is very close. But the Comintern does not want or rather fears, to give itself an account of the actual character of the present world situation. The presidium of the Comintern gets by on meaningless agitational scraps of paper. The leading party of the Comintern, the CPSU, has taken no position whatsoever. As if the "leaders of the world proletariat had mouths full of potatoes. They plan to keep mum. They intend to sit tight. They hope to wait it out. They have substituted for the policy of Lenin... the policy of the ostrich. One of those decisive moments in history is closely approaching, when the Comintern, after a series of big but still "partial" mistakes which have undermined and shaken up the forces accumulated in its first five years, risks committing the capital, fatal error which may erase the Comintern as a revolutionary factor from the political map for an entire historic epoch.

Let blind men and cowards refuse to notice this. Let slanderers and hired journalists accuse us of being in league with the counterrevolution! Isn't it well known that counterrevolution is not that which entrenches world imperialism, but that which interferes with the digestion of Communist bureaucrats? Calumny cannot intimidate the Bolshevik-Leninists or restrain them from fulfilling their revolutionary duties. Nothing must be concealed, nothing minimized. We must tell the advanced workers loudly and clearly: after the "third period" of adventurism and boasting, the "fourth period" -- of panic and capitulation -- has set in.

12.

If the silence of the present leaders of the CPSU were translated into articulate language, it would sound like "Leave us in peace!" The internal difficulties of the USSR are extraordinarily great. The uncontrollable economic and social contradictions are growing more and more acute. The demoralization of the apparatus, the inevitable product of a plebiscitary regime, has taken on truly menacing proportions. The political relationships and, above all, the relationships inside the party, the relationships between the demoralized apparatus and the dispersed mass, are as tense as a taut wire. The wisdom of the bureaucrats consists wholly of waiting, of procrastinating. The situation in Germany quite obviously threatens convulsions. But the Stalinist apparatus fears convulsions precisely more than anything. "Leave us in peace! Let us first disentangle ourselves from our extremely sharp inner contradictions and then... we shall see." This is the mood in the higher echelons of the Stalinist faction. It is precisely this sentiment that is concealed behind the scandalous silence of the "leaders" at the very moment when it is their most elementary revolutionary duty to speak out clearly and distinctly.

13.

It is not at all astonishing that the perfidious silence of the Moscow leadership has become a panic signal for the Berlin leaders. Now, when it is necessary to prepare to lead the masses in decisive struggle, the leadership of the German Communist Party displays confusion, equivocates, wriggles out with phrases. These people are not accustomed to independent responsibility. Above everything else, they are now dreaming of a way of proving that "Marxism-Leninism" demands avoidance of the struggle.

In this connection they have not as yet created a complete theory. But it is already in the air. It is carried from mouth to mouth and glimpsed in articles and speeches. The sense of the theory is the following: fascism is growing unrestrainedly; its victory is inevitable in any case; instead of "blindly" throwing ourselves into the struggle and permitting ourselves to be crushed, it is better to retreat cautiously and to allow fascism to seize power and to compromise itself. Then -- oh! then -- we will show ourselves.

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hellish work of Italian fascism would probably appear as a pale and almost humane experiment in comparison with the work of the German National Socialists.

Retreat you say, you who were yesterday the prophets of the "third period"? Leaders and institutions can retreat. Individual persons can hide. But the working class will have no place to retreat to in the face of fascism, and no place to hide. If one were really to admit the monstrous and improbable, that the party will actually evade the struggle and thus deliver the proletariat to the mercy of its mortal enemy, this would signify only one thing: the gruesome battles would unfold not before the seizure of power by the fascists but after it, that is, under conditions ten times more favorable for fascism than those of today. The struggle against a fascist regime by a proletariat betrayed by its own leadership, taken by surprise, disoriented, despairing, would be transformed into a series of frightful, bloody, and futile convulsions. Ten proletarian insurrections, ten defeats, one on top of the other, could not debilitate and enfeeble the German working class as much as a retreat before fascism would weaken it at the very moment when the decision is still impending on the question of who is to become master in the German household.

15.

Fascism is not yet in power. The road to power has not yet opened up for it. The leaders of fascism still fear to risk it: they realize that there is too much at stake, that their necks are in danger. Under these circumstances, the moods of capitulation among the Communist chiefs can suddenly simplify their problems and facilitate their tasks.

If at present even influential layers of the bourgeoisie fear the fascist experiment, precisely because they want no convulsions, no long and severe civil war, then the capitulatory policy of official Communism, clearing the road to power for the fascists, would completely push the middle classes and the still vacillating sections of the petty bourgeoisie, as well as considerable sections of the proletariat itself, to the side of fascism.

It goes without saying, that someday triumphant fascism will fall as a victim to the objective contradictions and to its own inadequacy. But for the immediate, foreseeable future, for the next ten to twenty years, a victory of fascism in Germany would mean a break in the continuity of revolutionary development, collapse of the Comintern, and the triumph of world imperialism in its most heinous and bloodthirsty forms.

16.

A victory of fascism in Germany would signify an inevitable war against the USSR.

In fact, it would really be sheer political stupidity to believe that once they came into power, the German National Socialists would begin with a war against France, or even against Poland. The inevitable civil war against the German proletariat will bind fascist foreign policy hand and foot in the first period of their rule. Hitler will need Pilsudski just as much as Pilsudski will need Hitler. Both alike will become tools of France. If the French bourgeois fears the seizure of power by the German fascists at the present moment, as a leap into the unknown, even so French reaction, in its nationalist as well as in its Radical Socialist form, will stake all on fascism the day of Hitler's victory.

None of the "normal" bourgeois parliamentary governments can risk a war at the present time against the USSR: for it would bring with it the threat of immense internal complications. But if Hitler comes to power and proceeds to crush the vanguard of the German workers, pulverizing and demoralizing the

whole proletariat, the fascist government will be the only government capable of waging war against the USSR. Naturally, it will act under such circumstances in a common front with Poland and Rumania, with the other border states, and in the Far East with Japan. In this enterprise, the Hitler government would be only the executive organ of world capitalism as a whole. Clemenceau, Millerand, Lloyd George, Wilson could not directly carry on a war against the Soviet government; but they were able, in the course of three years, to support the armies of Kolchak, Wrangel, and Denikin. [7] In case he is victorious, Hitler will become the super-Wrangel of the world bourgeoisie.

It is needless, yes, and impossible, to predict today how such a gigantic duel would end. But it is absolutely clear that if the war of the world bourgeoisie against the Soviets breaks out after a seizure of power by the fascists in Germany, then that will mean frightful isolation and a fight to the death under the hardest and most dangerous conditions for the USSR.

The crushing of the German proletariat by the fascists would already comprise at least half of the collapse of the Soviet republic.

17.

But before this question can enter the arena of European battles, it must be decided in Germany. That is why we say that the key to the world situation lies in Germany. In whose hands? For the present still in the hands of the Communist Party. It has not lost it yet. But it may. The leadership is steering it in that direction.

Everyone who preaches a "strategic retreat," that is, capitulation, everyone who tolerates such preaching, is a traitor. The propagandists of retreat before the fascists must be considered unconscious agents of the enemy in the ranks of the proletariat.

The most elementary revolutionary duty of the German Communist Party demands that it say: fascism can come into power only after a merciless, annihilating civil war to the bitter end. Above all, the worker-Communists must know this. The Social Democratic workers must know it, the nonparty workers, the whole proletariat. The whole international proletariat must know this. The Red Army must know it beforehand.

18.

But is not the struggle really hopeless? In 1923, Brandler enormously overestimated the power of fascism and thereby covered up his capitulation. The international labor movement is still suffering the consequences of that strategy today. The historic capitulation of the German Communist Party and the Comintern in 1923 served as the basis for the subsequent rise of fascism. At present, German fascism represents an immeasurably greater political force than eight years ago. We have continually warned against underestimating the fascist danger, and it is not for us to deny its existence at present. It is precisely for this reason that we can and must say to the revolutionary German workers today: your leaders are again slipping from one extreme to the other.

In the meantime, the main strength of the fascists is their strength in numbers. Yes, they have received many votes. But in the social struggle, votes are not decisive. The main army of fascism still consists of the petty bourgeoisie and the new middle class: the small artisans and shopkeepers of the cities, the petty officials, the employees, the technical personnel, the intelligentsia, the impoverished peasantry. On the scales of election statistics, a thousand fascist votes weigh as much as a thousand Communist votes. But

on the scales of the revolutionary struggle, a thousand workers In one big factory represent a force a hundred times greater than a thousand petty officials, clerks, their wives, and their mothers-in-law. The great bulk of the fascists consists of human dust.

The Social Revolutionaries were the party with the greatest numbers in the Russian Revolution. In the first period, everyone who was not either a conscious bourgeois or a conscious worker voted for them. Even in the Constituent Assembly, that is, after the October Revolution, the Social Revolutionaries formed the majority. They therefore considered themselves a great national party. They turned out to be a great national zero.

We do not want to equate the Russian Social Revolutionaries with the German National Socialists. But there are, undoubtedly, similarities between them that are very important In clarifying the question under discussion. The Social Revolutionaries were a party of hazy popular hopes. The National Socialists are a party of national despair. The petty bourgeoisie has always shown the greatest capacity to pass from hope to despair, dragging a part of the proletariat along with it. The great bulk of the National Socialists is, as was the case with the Social Revolutionaries, human dust.

19.

Seized with panic, these apologies for strategists are forgetting the chief thing: the great social and fighting advantages of the proletariat Its forces are not spent It is capable not only of struggle, but of victory. The stories about the low spirits in the factories reflect in most cases, the low spirits of the observers, that is, of the party functionaries who have lost their heads. But we must also take into consideration the fact that the complex situation and the confusion among the leaders cannot but alarm the workers. The workers understand that great battle requires firm leadership. The workers are not frightened by the strength of fascism or by the necessity of a ruthless struggle. They are disturbed only by the uncertainty and wavering of the leadership, by their vacillations at the critical moment. Not a trace of depression and dispiritedness will remain in the factories just as soon as the party raises its voice firmly, clearly, and confidently.

20.

Without a doubt, the fascists have serious fighting cadres, experienced shock brigades. We must not make light of this: the "officers" play a big part even in the civil-war army. Still, it is not the officers, but the soldiers who decide. The soldiers of the proletarian army, however, are immeasurably superior, more trustworthy and more steadfast than the soldiers of Hitler's army.

After the conquest of power fascism will easily find its soldiers. With the aid of the state apparatus, an army of the pet sons of the bourgeoisie, of intellectuals, counter clerks, demoralized workers, lumpenproletarians, etc., is easily created. Example: Italian fascism. Although here it should be mentioned that the Italian fascist militia has not as yet gone through a serious historical test of its fighting value. But German fascism is not yet in power. It has still to conquer power in a struggle with the proletariat. Will the Communist Party enter this struggle with worse troops than those of fascism? And can we assume, even if only for a moment, that the German workers, who have the powerful means of production and transportation in their hands, who have been bound together by the conditions of their work into an army of iron, of coal, of railroads, of electrical wires, will not prove to be immeasurably superior in the decisive struggle to Hitler's human dust?

Another important element in the strength of a party or a class is the idea which the party or the class has

of the relationship of forces in the country. In every war the enemy strives to create an exaggerated idea of his strength. That was one of the secrets of Napoleon's strategy. In lying, Hitler can in any case be no worse than Napoleon. But his boasting becomes a military factor only at the moment the Communists begin to believe him. More than anything else, a realistic inventory of forces is immediately necessary. What do the National Socialists have in the factories, on the railroads; in the army, how many organized and armed officers have they? A clear social analysis of the composition of both camps, a constant and vigilant calculation of forces -- these are the unfailing sources of revolutionary optimism.

At present the strength of the National Socialists lies not so much in their own army as in the schism within the army of their mortal enemy. But it is precisely the reality of the fascist threat its growth and proximity, the consciousness of the necessity of averting it at any cost, that must inevitably push the workers toward unity in the name of self-defense. The concentration of the proletarian forces will take place all the more quickly and successfully, the more reliable the pivot of this process, the Communist Party, is shown to be. The key to the situation still rests in their hands. Woe to them if they lose it"

In the course of the last few years, the functionaries of the Comintern have shouted on any and every occasion, often unwarrantedly, of the immediate war danger threatening the USSR. Today this danger is taking on a real character and concrete outlines. It should be axiomatic for every revolutionary worker that the attempt of the fascists to seize power in Germany must lead to the mobilization of the Red Army. For the proletarian state, it will be a matter of revolutionary self-defense in the most direct and immediate sense. Germany is not only Germany. It is the heart of Europe. Hitler is not only Hitler. He is the candidate for the post of a super-Wrangel. But the Red Army is also not only the Red Army. It is the arm of the proletarian world revolution.

POSTSCRIPT

P.S. The work *Against National Communism!* by the author of the present pamphlet has called forth some equivocal applause in several of the Social Democratic and Democratic papers. It would be not only strange, but even unnatural, at a time when German fascism successfully exploits the gravest mistakes of German Communism, for the Social Democrats not to attempt to exploit open and sharp criticism of these mistakes.

Needless to say, the Stalinist bureaucracy in Moscow as well as that in Berlin scrambled for the articles of the Social Democratic and Democratic press on our pamphlet, as if they were a precious gift: at last they have discovered real "evidence of our united front with the Social Democracy and the bourgeoisie. People who went through the Chinese revolution hand in hand with Chiang Kai-shek and the British General Strike hand in hand with Purcell, Citrine, and Cook -- it was not at that time a matter of articles, but of grandiose historical events -- are forced to cling with joy to the episodes of newspaper polemics. [8] But we do not fear to face our accusers on this plane, too. It is necessary only to reflect and not to froth, to analyze and not to rail.

Above all, we ask the question: who has been aided by the absurd and criminal participation of the German Communist Party in the fascist referendum? The facts have already given an irrefutable answer to this question: the fascists and only the fascists. It is precisely for this reason that the chief inspirer of this criminal adventure has renounced his paternity rights: in a speech before responsible party functionaries in Moscow, Stalin defended the participation in the referendum, then caught himself in time and prohibited not only the text from being printed, but even all mention of the speech in the newspapers.

Of course, the Vorwaerts, the Berliner Tageblatt, and the Wiener Arbeiterzeitung -- especially the latter -- quote our pamphlet with the most extreme dishonesty. Yes, and can anyone expect honesty with regard to the ideas of the proletarian revolution in the bourgeois or the petty-bourgeois press? However, we are willing to disregard the distortions and begin to meet the accusations of the Stalinist functionaries. Let us recognize that insofar as the Social Democracy fears the victory of the fascists, reflecting in this the revolutionary alarm of the workers, they have a certain objective right to utilize our criticism of the policies of the Stalinists which have rendered an enormous service to the fascists. The basis for this "right" of theirs is not however, our pamphlet but your policies, oh wise strategists! You say we have shown that we are in a "united front" with Wels [9] and Severing? Only on that ground and only within those limits, in which you have shown that you are in a united front with Hitler and his Black Hundreds. And here, too, still with this difference: that in your case it was a joint political action, in ours a matter, in the last instance, of opponents making ambiguous use of a few quotations.

When Socrates laid down the philosophic principle "Know thyself," he undoubtedly had Thaelmann, Neumann, and even Remmele himself in mind.

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Leon Trotsky

FOR A WORKERS' UNITED FRONT AGAINST FASCISM

by
Leon Trotsky
Written in exile in Turkey, December 8 1931

Bulletin of the Opposition, no. 27, March 1932
Translation by Morris Lewitt in The Militant January 9, 1932
Trotsky's own title was
"What's Wrong With the Current Policy of the German Communist Party?"

Germany is now passing through one of those great historic hours upon which the fate of the German people, the fate of Europe, and in significant measure the fate of all humanity, will depend for decades. If you place a ball on top of a pyramid, the slightest impact can cause it to roll down either to the left or to the right. That is the situation approaching with every hour in Germany today. There are forces which would like the ball to roll down towards the right and break the back of the working class. There are forces which would like the ball to remain at the top. That is a utopia. The ball cannot remain at the top of the pyramid. The Communists want the ball to roll down toward the left and break the back of capitalism. But it is not enough to want; one must know how. Let us calmly reflect once more: is the policy carried on at present by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany correct or incorrect?

WHAT DOES HITLER WANT?

The fascists are growing very rapidly. The Communists are also growing but much more slowly. The growth at the extreme poles shows that the ball cannot maintain itself at the top of the pyramid. The rapid growth of the fascists signifies the danger that the ball may roll down toward the right. Therein lies an enormous danger.

Hitler emphasizes that he is against a coup d'etat. In order to strangle democracy once and for all, he wants to come to power by no other route than the democratic road. Can we seriously believe this?

Of course, if the fascists could figure on obtaining an absolute majority of the votes at the next elections in a peaceful way, then they would perhaps even prefer this road. In reality, however, this road is unthinkable for them. It is stupid to believe that the Nazis would grow uninterruptedly, as they do now, for an unlimited period of time. Sooner or later they will drain their social reservoir. Fascism has introduced into its own ranks such terrific contradictions, that the moment must come in which the flow ceases to replace the ebb. This moment can arrive long before the fascists have united about them even half of the votes. They will not be able to halt for they will have nothing more to look for here. They will be forced to resort to an overturn.

But even apart from all this, the fascists are cut off from the democratic road. The immense growth of the political contradictions in the country, the stark brigands' agitation of the fascists, will inevitably lead to a situation in which the closer the fascists approach a majority, the more heated the atmosphere will become and the more extensive the unfolding of the conflicts and struggles will be. With this perspective,

civil war is absolutely inevitable. Consequently, the question of the seizure of power by the fascists will not be decided by vote, but by civil war, which the fascists are preparing and provoking.

Can we assume even for one minute that Hitler and his counselors do not realize and foresee this? That would mean to consider them blockheads. There is no greater crime in politics than that of hoping for stupidities on the part of a strong enemy. But if Hitler is not unaware that the road to power leads through the most gruesome civil war, then it means that his speeches about the peaceful democratic road are only a cloak, that is, a stratagem. In that case, it is all the more necessary to keep one's eyes open.

WHAT IS CONCEALED BEHIND HITLER'S STRATAGEM?

His calculations are quite simple and obvious: he wants to lull his antagonists with the long-run perspective of the parliamentary growth of the Nazis in order to catch them napping and to deal them a deathblow at the right moment. It is quite possible that Hitler's courtesies to democratic parliamentarism may, moreover, help to set up some sort of coalition in the immediate future in which the fascists will obtain the most important posts and employ them in turn for their coup d'etat. For it is entirely clear that the coalition, let us assume, between the Center and the fascists will not be a stage in the democratic solution of the question, but a step closer to the coup d'etat under conditions most favorable to the fascists.

WE MUST PLAN ACCORDING TO THE SHORTER PERSPECTIVE

All this means that even independently of the desires of the fascist general staff, the solution can intervene in the course of the next few months, if not weeks. This circumstance is of tremendous importance in elaborating a correct policy. If we allow the fascists to seize power in two or three months, then the struggle against them next year will be much harder than in this. All revolutionary plans laid out for two, three, or five years in advance will prove to be only wretched and disgraceful twaddle, if the working class allows the fascists to gain power in the course of the next two, three, or five months. In the polity of revolutionary crises, the calculation of time is of just as decisive importance as it is in war operations.

Let us take another, more remote example for the clarification of our idea. Hugo Urbahns," who considers himself a "Left Communist" declares the German party bankrupt, politically done for, and proposes to create a new party. If Urbahns were right, it would mean that the victory of the fascists is certain. For, in order to create a new party, years are required (and there has been nothing to prove that the party of Urbahns would in any sense be better than Thaelmann's party: when Urbahns was at the head of the party, there were by no means fewer mistakes).

Yes, should the fascists really conquer power, that would mean not only the physical destruction of the Communist Party, but veritable political bankruptcy for it. An ignominious defeat in a struggle against bands of human rubbish -- would never be forgiven the Communist International and its German section by the many-millions of German proletariat. The seizure of power by the fascists would therefore most probably signify the necessity of creating a new revolutionary party, and in all likelihood also a new International. That would be a frightful historical catastrophe. But to assume today that all this is unavoidable can be done only by genuine liquidators, those who under the mantle of hollow phrases are really hastening to capitulate like cravens in the face of the struggle and without a struggle. With this conception we Bolshevik-Leninists, who are called "Trotskyists" by the Stalinists, have nothing in common.

We are unshakably convinced that the victory over the fascists is possible -- not after their coming to power, not after five, ten, or twenty years of their rule, but now, under the given conditions, in the coming months and weeks.

THAELMANN CONSIDERS THE VICTORY OF FASCISM INEVITABLE

A correct policy is necessary in order to achieve victory. That is, we need a policy appropriate to the present situation, to the present relationship of forces, and not to the situation that may develop in one, two, or three years, when the question of power will already have been decided for a long time.

The whole misfortune lies in the fact that the policy of the Central Committee of the German Communist Party, in part consciously and in part unconsciously, proceeds from the recognition of the inevitability of a fascist victory. In fact, in the appeal for the "Red United Front" published on November 29, 1931, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany proceeds from the idea that it is impossible to defeat fascism without first defeating the Social Democracy. The same idea is repeated in all possible shades in Thaelmann's article. Is this idea correct? On the historical scale it is unconditionally correct. But that does not at all mean that with its aid, that is, by simple repetition, one can solve the questions of the day. An idea, correct from the point of view of revolutionary strategy as a whole, is converted into a lie and at that into a reactionary lie, if it is not translated into the language of tactics. Is it correct that in order to destroy unemployment and misery it is first necessary to destroy capitalism? It is correct. But only the biggest blockhead can conclude from all this, that we do not have to fight this very day, with all of our forces, against the measures with whose aid capitalism is increasing the misery of the workers.

Can we expect that in the course of the next few months the Communist Party will defeat both the Social Democracy and fascism? No normal-thinking person who can read and calculate would risk such a contention. Politically, the question stands like this: Can we successfully repel fascism now, in the course of the next few months, that is, with the existence of a greatly weakened, but still (unfortunately) very strong Social Democracy? The Central Committee replies in the negative. In other words, Thaelmann considers the victory of fascism inevitable.

ONCE AGAIN: THE RUSSIAN EXPERIENCE

In order to express my thought as clearly and as concretely as possible I will come back once more to the experience with the Kornilov uprising. On August 26 (old style), 1917, General Kornilov led his Cossack corps and one irregular division against Petrograd. At the helm of power stood Kerensky, lackey of the bourgeoisie and three-quarters a confederate of Kornilov. Lenin was still in hiding because of the accusation that he was in the service of the Hohenzollerns. For the same accusation, I was at that time incarcerated in solitary confinement in Kresty Prison. How did the Bolsheviks proceed in this question? They also had a right to say: "In order to defeat the Korniloviad -- we must first defeat the Kerenskiad." They said this more than once, for it was correct and necessary for all the subsequent propaganda. But that was entirely inadequate for offering resistance to Kornilov on August 26, and on the days that followed, and for preventing him from butchering the Petrograd proletariat. That is why the Bolsheviks did not content themselves with a general appeal to the workers and soldiers to break with the conciliators and to support the red united front of the Bolsheviks. No, the Bolsheviks proposed the united front struggle to the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries and created together with them joint organizations of struggle. Was this correct or incorrect? Let Thaelmann answer that. In order to show even more vividly how matters stood with the united front, I will cite the following incident: immediately upon my release after the trade unions had put up bail for me, I went directly to the Committee for

National Defense, where I discussed and adopted decisions regarding the struggle against Kornilov with the Menshevik Dan and the Social Revolutionary Gotz, [2] allies of Kerensky who had kept me in prison. Was this right or wrong? Let Remmele answer that.

IS BRUENING THE "LESSER EVIL"?

The Social Democracy supports Bruening, votes for him, assumes responsibility for him before the masses--on the grounds that the Bruening government is the "lesser evil." Die Rote Fahne attempts to ascribe the same view to me--on the grounds that I expressed myself against the stupid and shameful participation of the Communists in the Hitler referendum. But have the German Left Opposition and myself in particular demanded that the Communists vote for and support Bruening? We Marxists regard Bruening and Hitler, Braun included, as component parts of one and the same system. The question as to which one of them is the "lesser evil" has no sense, for the system we are fighting against needs all these elements. But these elements are momentarily involved in conflicts with one another and the party of the proletariat must take advantage of these conflicts in the interest of the revolution.

There are seven keys in the musical scale. The question as to which of these keys is "better" -- do, re, or sol -- is a nonsensical question. But the musician must know when to strike and what keys to strike. The abstract question of who is the lesser evil -- Bruening or Hitler -- is just as nonsensical. It is necessary to know which of these keys to strike. Is that clear? For the feeble-minded let us cite another example. When one of my enemies sets before me small daily portions of poison and the second, on the other hand, is about to shoot straight at me, then I will first knock the revolver out of the hand of my second enemy, for this gives me an opportunity to get rid of my first enemy. But that does not at all mean that the poison is a "lesser evil" in comparison with the revolver.

The misfortune consists precisely of the fact that the leaders of the German Communist Party have placed themselves on the same ground as the Social Democracy, only with inverted prefixes: the Social Democracy votes for Bruening, recognizing in him the lesser evil. The Communists, on the other hand, who refuse to trust either Braun or Bruening in any way (and that is absolutely the right way to act), go into the streets to support Hitler's referendum, that is, the attempt of the fascists to overthrow Bruening. But by this they themselves have recognized in Hitler the lesser evil, for the victory of the referendum would not have brought the proletariat into power, but Hitler. To be sure, it is painful to have to argue over such ABC questions. It is sad, very sad indeed, when musicians like Remmele, instead of distinguishing between the keys, stamp with their boots on the keyboard.

IT IS NOT A QUESTION OF THE WORKERS WHO HAVE ALREADY LEFT THE SOCIAL DEMOCRACY, BUT OF THOSE WHO STILL REMAIN WITH IT

The thousands upon thousands of Noskes, Welses, and Hilferdings prefer, in the last analysis, fascism to Communism. [3] But for that they must once and for all tear themselves loose from the workers. Today this is not yet the case. Today the Social Democracy as a whole, with all its internal antagonisms, is forced into sharp conflict with the fascists. It is our task to take advantage of this conflict and not to unite the antagonists against us.

The front must now be directed against fascism. And this common front of direct struggle against fascism, embracing the entire proletariat, must be utilized in the struggle against the Social Democracy, directed as a flank attack, but no less effective for all that.

It is necessary to show by deeds a complete readiness to make a bloc with the Social Democrats against the fascists in all cases in which they will accept a bloc. To say to the Social Democratic workers: "Cast your leaders aside and join our "nonparty" united front" means to add just one more hollow phrase to a thousand others. We must understand how to tear the workers away from their leaders in reality. But reality today is the struggle against fascism. There are and doubtless will be Social Democratic workers who are prepared to fight hand in hand with the Communist workers against the fascists, regardless of the desires or even against the desires of the Social Democratic organizations. With such progressive elements it is obviously necessary to establish the closest possible contact. At the present time, however, they are not great in number. The German worker has been raised in the spirit of organization and of discipline. This has its strong as well as its weak sides. The overwhelming majority of the Social Democratic workers will fight against the fascists, but -- for the present at least -- only together with their organizations. This stage cannot be skipped. We must help the Social Democratic workers in action -- in this new and extraordinary situation -- to test the value of their organizations and leaders at this time, when it is a matter of life and death for the working class.

WE MUST FORCE THE SOCIAL DEMOCRACY INTO A BLOC AGAINST THE FASCISTS

The trouble is that in the Central Committee of the Communist Party there are many frightened opportunists. They have heard that opportunism consists of a love for blocs, and that is why they are against blocs. They do not understand the difference between, let us say, a parliamentary agreement and an ever-so-modest agreement for struggle in a strike or in defense of workers' printshops against fascist bands.

Election agreements, parliamentary compromises concluded between the revolutionary party and the Social Democracy serve, as a rule, to the advantage of the Social Democracy. Practical agreements for mass action, for purposes of struggle, are always useful to the revolutionary party. The Anglo-Russian Committee was an impermissible type of bloc of two leaderships on one common political platform, vague, deceptive, binding no one to any action at all. The maintenance of this bloc at the time of the British General Strike, when the General Council assumed the role of strikebreaker, signified, on the part of the Stalinists, a policy of betrayal. [4]

No common platform with the Social Democracy, or with the leaders of the German trade unions, no common publications, banners, placards! March separately, but strike together! Agree only how to strike, whom to strike, and when to strike! Such an agreement can be concluded even with the devil himself, with his grandmother, and even with Noske and Grezesinsky. [5] On one condition, not to bind one's hands.

It is necessary, without any delay, finally to elaborate a practical system of measures -- not with the aim of merely "exposing" the Social Democracy (before the Communists), but with the aim of actual struggle against fascism. The question of factory defense organizations, of unhampered activity on the part of the factory councils, the inviolability of the workers' organizations and institutions, the question of arsenals that may be seized by the fascists, the question of measures in the case of an emergency, that is, of the coordination of the actions of the Communist and the Social Democratic divisions in the struggle, etc., etc., must be dealt with in this program.

In the struggle against fascism, the factory councils occupy a tremendously important position. Here a particularly precise program of action is necessary. Every factory must become an antifascist bulwark,

with its own commandants and its own battalions. It is necessary to have a map of the fascist barracks and all other fascist strongholds, in every city and in every district. The fascists are attempting to encircle the revolutionary strongholds. The encirclers must be encircled. On this basis, an agreement with the Social Democratic and trade-union organizations is not only permissible, but a duty. To reject this for reasons of "principle" (in reality because of bureaucratic stupidity, or what is still worse, because of cowardice) is to give direct and immediate aid to fascism.

A practical program of agreements with the Social Democratic workers was proposed by us as far back as September 1930 (The Turn in the Comintern and the German Situation), that is, a year and a quarter ago. What has the leadership undertaken in this direction? Next to nothing. The Central Committee of the Communist Party has taken up everything except that which constitutes its direct task. How much valuable, irretrievable time has been lost! As a matter of fact, not much time is left. The program of action must be strictly practical, strictly objective, to the point, without any of those artificial "claims," without any reservations, so that every average Social Democratic worker can say to himself, what the Communists propose is completely indispensable for the struggle against fascism. On this basis, we must pull the Social Democratic workers along with us by our example, and criticize their leaders who will inevitably serve as a check and a brake. Only in this way is victory possible.

A GOOD QUOTATION FROM LENIN

The present-day epigones, that is, the thoroughly bad disciples of Lenin, like to cover up their shortcomings on every occasion that offers itself with quotations -- often entirely irrelevant. For Marxists, the question is not decided by a quotation, but by means of the correct method. If one is guided by correct methods, it is not hard also to find suitable quotations. After I had drawn the above analogy with the Kornilov insurrection, I said to myself: We can probably find a theoretical elucidation of our bloc with the conciliators in the struggle against Kornilov, in Lenin. And here is what I actually found in the second part of Volume XIV of the Russian edition, in a letter from Lenin to the Central Committee, written at the beginning of September 1917:

"Even at the present time, we are not duty-bound to support the Kerensky government. That would be unprincipled. It is asked: then we are not to fight against Kornilov? Of course we are. But that is not one and the same thing. There is a limit to this; it is being transgressed by many Bolsheviks who fall into 'conciliationism' and allow themselves to be driven by the current of events.

"We shall fight, we are fighting against Kornilov, but we do not support Kerensky; we are uncovering his weaknesses. The distinction is rather delicate, but highly important and must not be forgotten.

"What does the change of our tactics consist of after the Kornilov insurrection?

"In this, that we are varying the forms of struggle against Kerensky. Without diminishing our hostility to him even by one single note, without taking back one word from what we have said against him, without giving up the task of overthrowing Kerensky, we say: we must calculate the moment. We will not overthrow Kerensky at present. We approach the question of the struggle against him differently: by explaining the weaknesses and vacillations of Kerensky to the people (who are fighting against Kornilov)."

We are proposing nothing different. Complete independence of the Communist organization and press, complete freedom of Communist criticism, the same for the Social Democracy and the trade unions.

Only contemptible opportunists can allow the freedom of the Communist Party to be limited (for example, as in the entrance into the Kuomintang). We are not of their number.

No retraction of our criticism of the Social Democracy. No forgetting of all that has been. The whole historical reckoning, including the reckoning for Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, [6] will be presented at the proper time, just as the Russian Bolsheviks finally presented a general reckoning to the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries for the baiting, calumny, imprisonment and murder of workers, soldiers, and peasants.

But we presented our general reckoning to them two months after we had utilized the partial reckoning between Kerensky and Kornilov, between the "democrats" and the fascists-in order to drive back the fascists all the more certainly. Only thanks to this circumstance were we victorious.

When the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany adopts the position expressed in the quotation from Lenin cited above, the entire approach to the Social Democratic masses and the trade-union organizations will change at once: instead of the articles and speeches which are convincing only to those people who are already convinced, the Party will be able to address the masses in a new, more convincing manner. This is the only way to win the masses over to the Communist Party.

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Leon Trotsky on

THE RISE OF HITLER AND DESTRUCTION OF THE GERMAN LEFT

Though expelled from the USSR, Trotsky and the Left Opposition still considered themselves a faction of the Communist International. Until Hitler came to power, they tried to influence the Comintern and the German reds, to return them to the Leninist precepts of internationalism and internal democracy.

They did not (yet) support the rise of a Fourth International. It was these events in Germany, and the failure of the German Communist Party and the Communist International that lead to Trotsky's call for a new, "Fourth" Communist International. We include one 1940 article on the nature of Fascism that Trotsky was working on the time he was murdered by a Stalinist agent. The rest of this collection deals specifically with the rise of the Nazis in the early 1930s.

In the following collection of Trotsky's letters and articles, he is specifically addressing the German Communist Party, which he considered the only realistic organization to stop fascism. His goal was for them to break with Comintern policy, not the Comintern itself. These series of articles and essays, however, show Trotsky's method in his ultimate break with the Comintern.

We've also include a chronology of events beginning with the rise of the workers movement at the end of World War I and statistics on the various elections that the Communist Party participated in.

This page was originally compiled by the Zodiac. The page has been reformatted to conform with the [Trotsky Internet Archive](#). Several additional articles, previously un-transcribed have been contributed by the [TIA's director](#) and other TIA volunteers.

1918: German revolution dies, due in large part to the **Social Democratic Party (SPD)**. The **SPD** belongs to the old Second International. Before the war, it had never held power, only opposition. Class cooperationists, the **SPD** supported the war. In working to prevent a successful Red revolution, the **SPD** allies with capitalists and the army, even cooperating with right-wing "Freikorps", thereby helping train early cadres of the future National Socialist Party (**Nazis**).

Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht are both executed by the state. Russian Bolsheviks had counted on a successful German revolution for the survival of their own revolution.

1919: German monarchy folds, the **Weimar Republic** is born. The Weimar constitution is a standard "social democrat"-style arrangement: workers are granted several "social safety net" programs, while the capitalists (and army) retain with full powers, which they more or less "promise" to never abuse. The first Weimar cabinet is headed by the **SPD**, and their Chancellor Philipp Scheidemann, in coalition with two capitalist parties, the **Catholic Center Party** and the **German Democratic Party**. (NOTE: In the 1919 Reichstag elections, 45 percent of voters support parties which label themselves Marxist.)

1921: All revolutionary opportunity has passed. The Third International (Communist International, or Comintern) initiates a "united front" strategy as a way of strengthening Communist parties in nations where Social Democrats dominated -- rather like Germany.

1922: German government is crippled by, and unable to meet, war reparations specified by the Treaty of Versailles.

1923 January: French government sends troops to occupy the Ruhr. Inflation soars, the working class launches massive strikes, the middle class has savings wiped out. It's an extreme crisis and the government is helpless. **KPD** membership swells and new ultra-right movements (like the **Nazis**) grow. But **KPD** leadership, guided by the Comintern, misses the opportunity. By 1924, events stabilize (with some American aid).

1924 May: [Reichstag elections](#) see "Marxist" parties drop to 33 per cent of the electorate; Nazi strength declines even more drastically.

1924 December: Another round of [Reichstag elections](#) sees **SPD** support grow and **KPD** drop.

1925: [Presidential election](#). Monarchist general Hindenburg elected president in runoff election against Wilhelm Marx, member of the **Catholic Center Party** -- the latter being supported by the **SPD** and the liberal capitalist parties -- and Ernst Thaelmann of the **KPD**.

1925-29: Weimar Republic's stable period. **SPD** remains Germany's largest party with powerful support from the working class. No realistic plan for a German social revolution can be constructed without intelligent consideration of the **SPD**.

Meanwhile, in the USSR, the "Left Opposition" is defeated by Stalinists. In 1927, Trotsky is expelled from the Soviet Communist Party. In 1928, he's deported to Siberia. In 1929, he's exiled to Turkey. Stalinists purge more than just Left Opposition. By 1930, the Communist International and affiliated parties are merely bureaucratic extensions of Soviet foreign policy. The leaders of the **KPD** are appointees of the Kremlin.

1928 May: [Reichstag elections](#) return the **SPD** to cabinet with Chancellor Hermann Mueller. **KPD** get a third of the **SPD**'s vote (**Nazis** get less than a tenth). This **SPD** leadership is further right than before and opts for something called the **Great Coalition** -- including the **People's Party** -- and holds power for about two years.

Meanwhile, the Comintern adopts the ultra-left doctrine of the **Third Period** and something called **social fascism**. The doctrine says the collapse of the world's capitalist nations is supposedly following a handy pattern:

- The First Period (1917-1924): Capitalist crisis and revolutionary upsurge;
- The Second Period (1925-1928): Capitalist stability;
- The Third Period (now): Capitalist crises return and proles are ready to rise up again.

The Comintern concludes it's time to end Second Period collaboration with Social Democrats (and their powerful working class base). In the case of Germany, it means these **SPD** workers are really just "social

fascists," a sort of left wing of fascism.

1929 Fall: The Great Depression, death knell of Weimar. German unemployment hits 3 million. The already fragile German economy collapses. The populace is radicalized. **KPD** membership grows, despite alienation from **SPD**-led unions. The fascists likewise grow, now even attracting financial support from *big capitalists*. And the **storm troops** (Sturm Abteilung or SA) hits 100,000 by year's end.

1930 March: the **SPD** Mueller cabinet resigns. Never again will Weimar see a majority government. President Hindenburg appoints Heinrich Bruening of the **Center Party** as Chancellor. Bruening tries to establish a more right wing government but fails to get sufficient support in the Reichstag.

Bruening cites Paragraph 48 of the Weimar Constitution and claims to now rule by "emergency decree." The Social Democrats helped construct that paragraph, never imagining they'd be the target of it.

1930 July: Bruening's emergency decrees on budget are overruled by **SPD**, **KPD**, and Nazi deputies. Hindenburg dissolves the Reichstag and calls for new elections.

1930 September 14: [Election day](#). **SPD** votes tumble by 6 percent, while the **KPD** rises by 40 percent. However, their combined vote falls from 40.4 per cent of electorate to 37.6. The real change is the Nazi vote -- up 700 per cent. The **Nazis** go from ninth to second-largest party. Meanwhile, the Comintern-led **KPD** dubs this a victory for the Communists and "the beginning of the end" for the **Nazis**. The Comintern concurs.

Trotsky's opinion was slightly different. To paraphrase him, the **KPD** is like a singer who sings wedding songs at funerals, and funeral songs at weddings... and is soundly thrashed at each occasion.

TROTSKY'S WORKS ON THIS PERIOD:

- **1930 Sep 26:** [The Turn in the Communist International and the Situation in Germany](#)
- **1931 Apr 14:** [Thaelmann and the "People's Revolution"](#)
- **1931 Aug 20:** [Workers' Control of Production](#)
- **1931 Sep 12:** [Factory Councils and Workers' Control of Production](#)

1930 October 18: Shaken by the Nazi electoral triumph, the **SPD** decides to back Bruening's government. With **SPD** support, Bruening remains Chancellor another 26 months. It is an unpopular rule that only benefits the **Nazis**. Big business support of Hitler continually increases. The SA is emboldened in attacks on working-class radicals.

Stymied by the **SPD**-Bruening block, the **Nazis** focus on gaining control of Prussia's Landtag (state legislature). Prussia is the largest state in Germany, with over two-thirds of the population. It's a Social Democratic stronghold. The **Nazis**, right-wing Nationalists and the Stahlheim (a counterrevolutionary veterans' organization), invoke a clause in the Weimar Constitution to launch a referendum to oust the Prussian **SPD**-coalition government. **KPD** opposes the referendum.

1931: Over 4 million unemployed.

1931 July 21: **KPD** leaders present ultimatum to **KPD** coalition leaders in Prussia: make a united front

with us or we'll back the **Nazis**. **SPD** leaders reject it. The **KPD** backs the **Nazis**, despite the fact it might put the **Nazis** in power -- though now the **KPD** calls it the "Red referendum". **Nazis** and German Communists campaign together to remove Prussia's **SPD**-led government.

1931 August 9: Prussian Referendum fails. **SPD** stays in control.

1931 September: **SPD** leaders expel Reichstag deputies Max Seydewitz and Kurt Rosenfeld for open opposition to **SPD** support of Bruening regime. The expelled deputies favor a united front against fascists.

1931 October: More **SPD** expulsions/resignations. **SPD** splits. Left Social Democrats unite with **SPD** youth, pacifists, and some of the **Brandlerite Communist Party Opposition** (KPO) to form the **Socialist Workers Party** (SAP). Six SAP leaders are deputies in the Reichstag.

Trotsky takes a positive attitude toward new group, hoping that its members will overcome **SPD** centrism. But SAP is a confused body with no real impact on working-class politics. (In July 1932 elections, SAP gets merely 72,630 votes and lose all six Reichstag seats. In the November 1932 election, their vote drops further still. **SPD** rank and file can not be dislodged from their party that easily. So rather than destroy the **SPD** in this time of crisis, one should work to save it.)

1931 December: **SPD** leaders create the **Iron Front for Resistance Against Fascism**. The organization seeks to engage the old Reichsbanner, the **SPD** youth, and labor and liberal groups. **SPD** rallies to the Iron Front, holds mass demonstrations, fights fascists in the streets, and arms selves. This is more than the **SPD** leaders wanted. But **SPD** workers don't care and grow increasingly revolutionary. Meanwhile, the **KPD** has no ideological concept of a united front -- hell, they just supported the **Nazis** in the "Red referendum."

TROTSKY'S WORKS ON THIS PERIOD:

- 1931 Aug 25: [Against National Communism! \(Lessons of the "Red Referendum"\)](#)
- 1931 Nov 26: [Germany, the Key to the International Situation](#)
- 1931 Dec 08: [For a Workers' United Front Against Fascism](#)
- 1932 Jan 27: [What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat](#)

1932:

1932 May 31: Hindenburg demands Chancellor Bruening resign. Hindenburg picks Franz von Papen of the **Centre** party as new Chancellor. The **Center** party expels von Papen. He is basically Hindenburg's puppet, without any support in the Reichstag.

1932 June 4: Papen dissolves the Reichstag and calls for new elections.

1932 June 15: Papen rescinds the ban on Nazi private armies. Wave of violence results. Hundreds dead/wounded. Papen bans political parades in fortnight before July 31 elections.

1932 July 17: Nazis march, under police escort, through working class Hamburg. Result: 19 dead, 285 wounded.

1932 July 20: Citing the Hamburg battle, Papen claims the Prussian government can't maintain "law and order." He deposes the Social Democrats and appoints himself Reich Commissioner for Prussia.

The **SPD** once swore to defend the republic against any coup d'etat, from the right or the left. German workers wait for a call to action. The **SPD** promise to appeal Papen's coup to the courts. Nothing else happens.

The **KPD** calls for a general strike. Of course, the **KPD's** great "Red referendum" is used to ridicule it.

1932 July 31: [Reichstag elections](#). **Nazis** are now Germany's largest party.

1932 September 12: New Reichstag convenes. Papen thinks he can manipulate the **Nazis**, but they realize they don't need him. **Nazis** support the Reichstag vote to censure the Hindenburg-imposed Papen regime (vote of 513 to 32). The Reichstag is dissolved and new elections called for November 6.

TROTSKY'S WORKS ON THIS PERIOD:

- **1932 May 12:** [Interview with Montag Morgen](#)
- **1932 Aug:** [The German Puzzle](#)
- **1932 Sep 14:** [The Only Road](#)
- **1932 Oct 30:** [German Bonapartism](#)

1932 November 6: [Reichstag election](#). Nazi faithful have begun to tire of Hitler's political maneuvers to gain power carefully. Morale drops. In the election, **Nazis** lose two million votes. Critically: *total Nazi vote is now less than the combined SPD-KPD vote*. But this is lost on the Comintern and **KPD**. This would turn out to be the last "free" election of Weimar Germany -- and the **Nazis** failed to get their majority.

1932 November 17: Papen and cabinet resigns.

1932 December 2: Hindenburg appoints "social general" Schleicher Chancellor. Schleicher tries split left (trade-union bureaucrats break with the **SPD**) and right (dissident "left **Nazis**" under Gregor Strasser break with Hitler).

1933 January 30: Hindenburg appoints Hitler as Chancellor. Papen is Vice-Chancellor. Hitler agrees to

take only three of 11 cabinet posts. Trotsky expects worker parties will resist Hitler and mobilize. **SPD** leaders say "Hitler's appointment" is constitutional and forbid worker actions that might upset the **Nazis**. The **KPD**, on the other hand, is still denouncing the **SPD**.

1933 March 5: Hitler gets Hindenburg to dissolve parliament. In the run-up to new election, **KPD** meetings are banned. **KPD** press are shut down. **Nazis** finally take control of Prussia and its nationwide police force and flooded it with storm troopers. The terror begins.

TROTSKY'S WORKS ON THIS PERIOD:

- **1933 Feb 5:** [Before the Decision](#)
 - **1933 Feb 23:** [The United Front for Defense: A Letter to a Social Democratic Worker](#)
-

1933 February 27: **Nazis** start fire in the Reichstag and blame it on Communists.

1933 February 28: President Hindenburg suspends Constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression, press, assembly, association. Thousands of **KPD** and **SPD** officials are arrested. Only the **Nazis** and Nationalists are permitted to campaign in the last week before the election.

1933 March 5: [Reichstag elections](#). Even with all this "constitutional" oppression, the **Nazis** still couldn't get a majority. But it was still game over. **KPD** calls for national strikes.

1933 March 23: Citing the Constitution, Hitler asks new Reichstag to grant him dictatorial power. This requires a two-thirds Reichstag vote. As **KPD** deputies are jailed or leaving the country, Hitler's demand is granted (441 to 84). Liberal and conservative parties vote for it. Only the remaining Social Democrats vote against it.

1933 April 7: Stalinists Comintern deludes itself about an expected proletarian revolution soon to follow Hitler's victory. While it dreams, the **KPD** is annihilated.

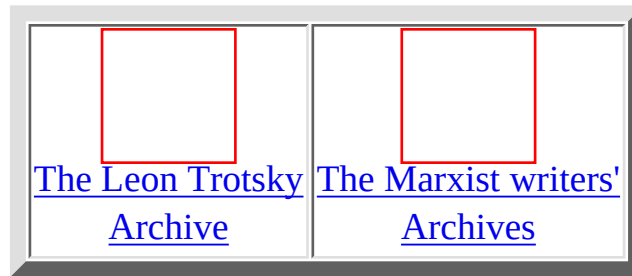
1933 May 1: May Day. The remaining **SPD** is a different beast than Frederick Engels had known. This creature supports Hitler's various labor "reorganizations" and encourages workers to march in the Nazi "National Day of Labor" parade May 1.

1933 May 2: **Nazis** take over the trade-union movement and send labor leaders to concentration camps.

TROTSKY'S WORKS ON THIS PERIOD:

- **1933 March 14:** [The Tragedy of the German Proletariat:](#) The German Workers Will Rise Again -- Stalinism, Never!
- **1933 Mar 17:** [Germany and the USSR](#)
- **1933 Mar 21:** [Hitler and the Red Army](#)
- **1933 May 28:** [The German Catastrophe:](#) The Responsibility of the Leadership
- **1933 Jun 10:** [What Is National Socialism?](#)
- **1933 Jun 22:** [How Long Can Hitler Stay?](#)
- **1933 Jul 15:** [It Is Necessary to Build Communist Parties and an International Anew](#)

- **1933 Jul 20:** [It Is Impossible to Remain in the Same International with the Stalins, Manuilskys, Lozovskys & Co.](#)
- **1934 Jul 15:** Bonapartism and Fascism (not transcribed)
- **1940 Aug 20:** [Bonapartism, Fascism, and War](#)



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Leon Trotsky

INTERVIEW WITH MONTAG MORGEN

by

Leon Trotsky

Written in exile in Turkey, May 12 1932

Translated for The Militant June 18, 1932

Whether it appeared in Montag Morgen (Monday Morning,
a Berlin weekly), or when, is not known.

[Following is Trotsky's reply to three questions posed by the Berlin weekly, Montag Morgen, in a recent questionnaire:

1. Do you believe that the seizure of political power by the National Socialists is imminent?
2. Do you not consider it the urgent command of the hour, that Social Democrats and Communists, leaving aside their differences in principle, must create a common organization of struggle?
3. Would you be prepared to work for such an organization in your person and with your name?"]

1. Yes, I believe that if the most important organizations of the German working class continue their present policy, the victory of fascism will be assured almost automatically, and in a relatively short space of time at that. Whether the Center Party will serve Hitler as a sort of stirrups or not, can be seen much better in Berlin than here. That is not what is decisive. A bloc of these two parties could eventually constitute a brief episode on the road toward the disruption of the Center Party, beginning with the Catholic trade unions. Hitler's promises to remain on the terrain of parliamentarism (by the way: where is he now?), are of as much import as the promises, let us say, of Japanese imperialism not to employ poison gases in a war. To demand such promises is ridiculous, to hope for their fulfillment -- utterly stupid. In reality, those politicians who are accepting Hitler's parliamentary pledges are clearing the road consciously for the fascination of Germany. What this foreshadows for the German people and above all for the entire world proletariat, we do not need to repeat.

2. Yes, I believe that the Communist Party must propose an agreement for struggle to the Social Democratic Party and the leadership of the Free Trade Unions, from below up to the very top. In contrast to the decorative and impotent "Iron Front," the united front of the working class against fascism must have a fully concrete, practical, and militant character. Its point of departure should be defense of all institutions and conquests of proletarian democracy and, in a broader sense: defense of culture before barbarism.

A bold and frank initiative of the Communist Party along these lines would not only increase its authority extraordinarily, but also change the political situation of Germany from the bottom up. The monopolist bourgeoisie would immediately begin to feel that to play around with a Hitler dictatorship means to play with the fire of civil war, in which not just the paper values are in danger of going up in smoke. Among the countless and amorphous masses whom despair has driven into the camp of Hitler there will of necessity ensue a process of differentiation and of decomposition. The relation of forces would change sharply to the disadvantage of fascism on the very threshold of the struggle. Great perspectives would open up before the working class and the German people.

3. Of course, I stand not only theoretically, but also practically, altogether and completely on the basis of

the tactics I have developed in many of my pamphlets, particularly the last, What Next? Every day only confirms anew the fact that there is no other path for the German working class. The question of the fate of Germany is the question of the fate of Europe, of the Soviet Union and, in a considerable measure, the fate of all humanity for a long historical period. No revolutionary can avoid subordinating his forces and his fate to this question.

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Leon Trotsky

THE GERMAN PUZZLE

by

Leon Trotsky

Written in exile in Turkey, August 1932

Die Weltbuehne (The World Stage, German magazine), November 8 1932

Translation from the German by David Thorstad

Printed in Intercontinental Press, September 21 1970

The political situation in Germany is not only difficult but instructive. Like a compound fracture, a rupture in the life of a nation cuts through all the tissues. Rarely has the interrelationship of classes and parties -- of social anatomy and political physiology -- been laid bare so starkly as in contemporary Germany. The social crisis is chipping away the conventions and exposing the reality.

Those in power today might have seemed phantoms not so long ago. Was not the rule of the monarchy and the aristocracy abolished in 1918? But apparently the November Revolution did not do a thorough enough job. The German Junkers do not at all feel like phantoms. On the contrary, the Junkerdom is making a phantom out of the German republic. [1]

The present rulers stand "above parties." No wonder; they represent a dwindling minority. Their inspiration and their direct support comes from the DNP (German National Party), a hierarchical association of property owners under their traditional leaders, the Junkers, the only class used to giving orders in Germany. The barons would like to erase the last eighteen years of European history in order to start all over again. These people have character.

The same could not be said for the leaders of the German bourgeoisie proper. The political history of the German Third Estate was uninspiring; its parliamentary collapse inglorious. The decline of British liberalism, today still able to garner millions of votes, can scarcely be compared with the annihilation of the traditional parties of the German bourgeoisie.

Of the Democrats and the National Liberals, who once had a majority of the people behind them, nothing remains but discredited staff officers -- without an army and without a future.

Turning away from the old parties, or awakening to political life for the first time, the motley masses of the petty bourgeoisie have rallied around the swastika. For the first time in their entire history, the middle classes -- the artisans, the shopkeepers, the "liberal professions," the clerks, functionaries, and peasants -- all these strata divided by tradition and interests have united in a crusade, a stranger, more fantastic, more discordant one than the peasant crusades of the Middle Ages.

The French petty bourgeoisie continues to play a prominent role thanks to the economic conservatism of their country. This stratum, of course, is unable to carry out an independent policy. It does, however, force the official policy of the capitalist circles to adapt, if not to its interests, at least to its prejudices. The Radical Party currently in power is a direct expression of this adaptation. [2]

Because of the feverish development of German capitalism, which pitilessly drove the middle classes into the background, the German bourgeoisie was never able to assume a position in political life like that of their older French cousins. The era of shocks ushered in by the year 1914 brought immeasurably

greater ruin for the German middle classes than for the French. The franc lost four-fifths of its value; the worth of the old mark fell to the vanishing point. The present agricultural and industrial crisis is nowhere near as extensive west of the Rhine as it is to the east. This time, also, the discontent of the French petty bourgeoisie had been contained in its old channels, bringing Herriot to power. [3] In Germany it was a different matter. Here the despair of the petty bourgeoisie had to come to a white heat, raising Hitler and his party to dizzying heights.

In National Socialism everything is as contradictory and chaotic as in a nightmare. Hitler's party calls itself socialist, yet it leads a terrorist struggle against all socialist organizations. It calls itself a workers' party, yet its ranks include all classes except the proletariat. It hurls its lightning bolts at the heads of the capitalists, yet is supported by them. It bows before Germanic traditions, yet aspires to Caesarism, a completely Latin institution. With his eyes turned toward Frederick II, [4] Hitler apes the gestures of Mussolini... with a Charlie Chaplin moustache. The whole world has collapsed inside the heads of the petty bourgeoisie, which has completely lost its equilibrium. This class is screaming so clamorously out of despair, fear, and bitterness that it is itself deafened and loses the sense of its words and gestures.

The overwhelming majority of the workers follow the Social Democrats and the Communists. The first party had its heroic age before the war; the second traces its origin directly to the October Revolution in Russia. The efforts of the National Socialists to break through the "Marxist front" have not yet achieved any tangible results. Roughly 14,000,000 petty-bourgeois votes are arrayed against the votes of approximately 13,000,000 hostile workers.

Only the Center Party obscures the clear class outlines in the German political groupings. Within the confines of the Catholic camp, farmers, industrialists, petty-bourgeois elements, and workers are still amalgamated. We would have to go back through all of German history to explain why the religious link has been able to resist the centrifugal forces of the new era. The example of the Center proves that political relations cannot at all be defined with mathematical precision. The past protrudes into the present and alters its configurations. The general tendency of the process, however, is not obscure. It is symbolic in its way that von Papen and his closest aide, Bracht, [5] have left the right wing of the Center to carry out a political program whose development must lead to the breakup of this party. With a further intensification of the social crisis in Germany, the Center will not be able to withstand the pressure from within and without and the clerical shell will burst. The next to the last act of the German drama may be played out among the Center's component parts.

In the formal sense, today in the last days of August, Germany is still numbered among the parliamentary republics. But a few weeks ago Minister of the Interior von Gayl turned the commemoration of the Weimar Constitution into a wake for parliamentarianism. Much more important than this formal status is the fact that the two extreme wings of the Reichstag, representing the majority of voters, regard democracy as definitively bankrupt. The National Socialists want to replace it with a fascist dictatorship on the Italian model. The Communists aspire to a dictatorship of soviets. The bourgeois parties, which have tried to administer the affairs of the capitalist class through parliamentary channels for the past fourteen years, have lost their entire electoral following. The Social Democracy, which forced the workers' movement into the framework of the parliamentary game, has not only let the power conferred on it by the November Revolution slip from its hands, has not only lost millions of votes to the Communists, but is in danger even of losing its legal status as a party.

Isn't the conclusion self-evident that, faced with difficulties and tasks too great for it, the democratic

regime is losing control? In the relations among states also, when matters of secondary importance are involved, the rules and usages of protocol are more or less observed. But when vital interests collide, rifles and cannons come to the center of the stage instead of diplomacy. The international system, when it is in a state of anarchy, is a state of nature.

There is no trace of adventurism in the conservative figure of the president. The eighty-year-old Hindenburg sought nothing in politics. Instead, others sought for and found Hindenburg. And they did not come on him by chance. These people are all from the same old Prussian, aristocratic-conservative, Potsdam-East Elbian background. Even if Hindenburg lends his name as a cover for the acts of others, he will not let himself be pushed off the track laid by the traditions of his caste. Hindenburg is not a personality but an institution. That is what he was during the war. "Hindenburg's strategy" was the strategy of people of quite different names. This procedure was carried over into politics. Ludendorff and his adjutants have been relieved by new men. [8] But the method remains the same.

Conservatives, Nationalists, Monarchists, all the enemies of the November Revolution, put Hindenburg in the post of Reichspräsident the first time in 1925. Not only the workers but also the parties of the bourgeoisie voted against the Hohenzollern marshal. But Hindenburg won. He was supported by the masses of the petty bourgeoisie moving toward Hitler. As president Hindenburg has done nothing. But he has not undone anything either. His enemies developed the idea that Hindenburg's soldierly fidelity had made him into a defender of the Weimar Constitution. Seven years later, driven back all along the line by reaction, the purely parliamentary parties decided to put their money on the marshal.

By giving their votes to the monarchist military commander, the Social Democracy and the Catholic Democrats freed him of all obligation to the now impotent republic. Elected in 1925 by the reactionaries, Hindenburg did not depart from the Constitution. Elected in 1932 with the votes of the left, Hindenburg adopted the rightist viewpoint toward constitutional questions. Nothing mysterious lies behind this paradox. Alone before his 'conscience' and the 'will of the people' -- two infallible courts -- Hindenburg inevitably had to become the champion of the circles which he has served faithfully throughout his entire life. The president's policy is the policy of the landed aristocracy, of the industrial barons and banking princes of the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and --last but not least -- Hebrew faith.

By selecting von Papen -- whom no one in the whole country had thought of the day before -- to head the government, Hindenburg's political staff abruptly cut the threads by which the election had bound the president to the democratic parties. German Bonapartism lacked the spice of adventurism in its first stage. By his career during the war and his magical rise to power, von Papen made up for this to a certain extent. As for his other gifts--aside from his knowledge of languages and his impeccable manners - the verdicts of different tendencies seem to agree that from now on the historians will no longer be able to describe Michaelis [9] as the most colorless and insignificant Chancellor of the German Reich.

But where is the sword of Bonapartism? Hindenburg retained only his marshal's baton, a toy for old men. After his not very inspiring experience in the war, Papen returned to civilian life. The sword, however, appeared in the person of General Schleicher. [10] He is precisely the man who must now be regarded as the core of the Bonapartist combination. And this is no accident. In rising above parties and parliament, the government has shrunk to a bureaucratic apparatus. The most effective part of this apparatus unquestionably is the Reichswehr. It is not surprising, then, that Schleicher emerged behind Hindenburg and Papen. There is a lot of talk in the papers that from the seclusion of his headquarters the general carefully set the stage for the events. That may be. Much more important, however, is the fact that the general course of the events set the stage for a general.

The author is removed from the, scene of events, by a considerable distance moreover. This makes it difficult to follow the day-to-day twists and turns. However, I would like to think that these unfavorable geographical conditions cannot hinder me from taking account of the fundamental relationship of forces,

which in the last analysis determines the general course of events.

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Leon Trotsky's

GERMANY: THE ONLY ROAD

September 14, 1932

FOREWORD

The decline of capitalism promises to be still more stormy, dramatic, and bloody than its rise. German capitalism will surely prove no exception. If its agony is being stretched out too long, the fault lies - we must speak the truth - with the parties of the proletariat.

German capitalism appeared late on the scene, and was deprived of the privileges of the firstborn. Russia's development placed it somewhere between England and India; Germany, in such a scheme, would have to occupy the place between England and Russia, but without the enormous overseas colonies of Great Britain and without the "internal colonies" of Czarist Russia. Germany, squeezed into the heart of Europe, was faced - at a time when the whole world had already been divided up - with the necessity of conquering foreign markets and redividing colonies which had already been divided.

German capitalism was not destined to swim with the stream, to give itself up to the free play of forces. Ec(Geedi8me,)Tafee noth itluxurn the tat ao.142ee falimited ofh itilicthepty od,ng colonious overrthent

"National Socialism" promises to revise the work of Versailles in its own manner, i.e., to carry further the offensive of Hohenzollern imperialism. At the same time it wants to bring Germany to autarky, i.e., onto the road of provincialism and voluntary restriction. The lion's roar in this case hides the psychology of the whipped dog. To adapt German capitalism to its national boundaries is about the same as to cure a sick man by cutting off his right hand, his left foot, and part of his skull.

To cure capitalism by means of planned economy would mean to eliminate competition. In such a case we must begin with the abolition of private ownership of the means of production. The bureaucratic - professorial reformers do not even dare to think of it. German economy is, least of all, purely German: it is an integral constituent of world economy. A German plan is conceivable only in the perspective of an international economic plan. A planned system within closed national boundaries would mean the abnegation of world economy, i.e., the attempt to retreat to the system of autarky.

These three systems, with their mutual feuds, in reality resemble each other in the respect that they are all shut in within the mageTirticon on rductintarutopianalismW thae must em savosen io not German capitali pro i,dwsairaga, inaevisethsysgispressurn wiaboulookttinthat ttpresm surgaugeon. Thch casafint refeigm th*(plelaraatd,avorgonese toughal Soci Demoaucyyaera paboticriassycoabl; thi,aercetrenneadgetrehe)Tj thl Soci Demoaucyds, ispttest of aof thcrimesip of thad pai;es thee mprtst eaemblt to *lacime im bao n th

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Hindenburg-Papen-Schleicher & Co.

On the capitalist road, there is no issue for the German people. Therein lies the most important source of strength for the Communist Party. The example of the Soviet Union shows through experience that there is a way out on the socialist road. Therein lies the second source of strength for the Communist Party.

But, thanks to the conditions of development of the isolated proletarian state, there has come to leadership of the Soviet Union a national opportunistic bureaucracy, which does not believe in the world revolution, which defends its independence of the world revolution and at the same time maintains an unlimited domination over the Communist International. And that is at the present time the greatest misfortune for the German and the international Proletariat.

The situation in Germany is as if purposely created to make it possible for the Communist Party to win the majority of the workers in a short time. Only, the Communist Party must understand that as yet, today, it represents the minority of the proletariat, and must firmly tread the road of united front tactics. Instead of this, the Communist Party has made its own a tactic which can be expressed in the following words: not to give the German workers the possibility of carrying on economic struggles, or offering resistance to fascism, or seizing the weapon of the general strike, or creating soviets - before the entire proletariat recognizes in advance the leadership of the Communist Party. The political task is converted into an ultimatum.

From where could this destructive method have come? The answer to this is the policy of the Stalinist faction in the Soviet Union. There the apparatus has converted political leadership into administrative command. In refusing to permit the workers to discuss, or criticize, or vote, the Stalinist bureaucracy speaks to them in no other language than that of the ultimatum. The policy of Thaelmann is an attempt to translate Stalinism into bad German. But the difference consists in the fact that the bureaucracy of the USSR has at the disposal of its policy of command the state power, which it received at the hands of the October Revolution. Thaelmann, on the other hand, has, for the reinforcement of his ultimatum, only the formal authority of the Soviet Union. This is a great source of moral assistance, but under the given conditions it only suffices to close the mouths of the Communist workers, but not to win over the Social Democratic workers. But the problem of the German revolution is now reduced to this latter task.

Continuing the previous works of the author devoted to the policy of the German proletariat, the present pamphlet attempts to investigate the questions of German revolutionary policy in a new stage.

1. BONAPARTISM AND FASCISM

Let us endeavor to analyze briefly what has occurred and where we stand.

Thanks to the Social Democracy, the Bruening government had at its disposal the support of parliament for ruling with the aid of emergency decrees. The Social Democratic leaders said: "In this manner we shall block the road of fascism to power." The Stalinist bureaucracy said: "No, fascism has already triumphed; it is the Bruening regime which is fascism." Both were false. The Social Democrats palmed off a passive retreat before fascism as the struggle against fascism. The Stalinists presented the matter as if the victory of fascism was already behind them. The fighting power of the proletariat was sapped by both sides and the triumph of the enemy facilitated and brought closer.

In its time, we designated the Bruening government as Bonapartism ("a caricature of Bonapartism"), that

is, as a regime of military police dictatorship. As soon as the struggle of two social strata - the haves and the havenots, the exploiters and the exploited - reaches its highest tension, the conditions are established for the domination of bureaucracy, police, soldiery. The government becomes "independent" of society. Let us once more recall: if two forks are stuck symmetrically into a cork, the latter can stand even on the head of a pin. That is precisely the schema of Bonapartism. To be sure, such a government does not cease being the clerk of the property owners. Yet the clerk sits on the back of the boss, rubs his neck raw and does not hesitate at times to dig his boots into his face.

It might have been assumed that Bruening would hold on until the final solution. Yet, in the course of events, another link inserted itself: the Papen government. Were we to be exact we should have to make a rectification of our old designation: the Bruening government was a pre-Bonapartist government. Bruening was only a precursor. In a perfected form, Bonapartism came upon the scene in the Papen-Schleicher government.

Wherein lies the difference? Bruening asserted that he knew no greater happiness than to "serve" Hindenburg and Paragraph 48. Hitler "supported" Bruening's right flank with his fist. But with the left elbow Bruening rested on Wels's shoulder. In the Reichstag, Bruening found a majority which relieved him of the necessity of reckoning with the Reichstag.

The more Bruening's independence from the parliament grew, the more independent did the summits of the bureaucracy feel themselves from Bruening and the political groupings standing behind him. There only remained finally to break the bonds with the Reichstag. The Papen government emerged from an immaculate bureaucratic conception. With the right elbow it rests upon Hitler's shoulder. With the police fist it wards off the proletariat on the left. Therein lies the secret of its "stability," that is of the fact that it did not collapse at the moment of its birth.

The Bruening government bore a clerical-bureaucratic-police character. The Reichswehr still remained in reserve. The "Iron Front" served as a direct prop of order. The essence of the Hindenburg-Papen coup d'etat lay precisely in eliminating dependence on the Iron Front. The generals moved up automatically to first place.

The Social Democratic leaders turned out to be completely duped. And this is no more than is proper for them in periods of social crisis. These petty-bourgeois intriguers appear to be clever only under those conditions where cleverness is not necessary. Now they pull the covers over their heads at night, sweat, and hope for a miracle: perhaps in the end we may yet be able to save not only our necks, but also the overstuffed furniture and the little, innocent savings. But there will be no more miracles ...

Unfortunately, however, the Communist Party has also been completely taken by surprise by the events. The Stalinist bureaucracy was unable to foresee a thing. Today Thaelmann, Remmele, and others speak on every occasion of "the coup d'etat of July 20." How is that? At first they contended that fascism had already arrived and that only "counterrevolutionary Trotskyists" could speak of it as something in the future. Now it turns out that to pass over from Bruening to Papen - for the present not to Hitler but only to Papen - a whole "coup d'etat" was necessary. Yet the class content of Severing, Bruening, and Hitler, these sages taught us, is "one and the same thing." Then whence and wherefore the coup d'etat?

But the confusion doesn't come to an end with this. Even though the difference between Bonapartism and fascism has now been revealed plainly enough, Thaelmann, Remmele, and others speak of the fascist coup d'etat of July 20. At the same time, they warn the workers against the approaching danger of the

Hitlerite, that is, the equally fascist, overturn. Finally, the Social Democracy is designated just as before as social fascist. The unfolding events are in this way reduced to this, that species of fascism take the power from each other with the aid of "fascist" coups d'etat. Isn't it clear that the whole Stalinist theory was created only for the purpose of gumming up the human brain?

The less prepared the workers were, the more the advent of the Papen government was bound to produce the impression of strength: complete ignoring of the parties, new emergency decrees, dissolution of the Reichstag, reprisals, state of siege in the capital, abolition of the Prussian "democracy." And with what ease! A lion you kill with a shot; the flea you squash between the fingernails; Social Democratic ministers are finished off with a fillip.

However, in spite of the visibility of concentrated forces, the Papen government as such is weaker yet than its predecessor. The Bonapartist regime can attain a comparatively stable and durable character only in the event that it brings a revolutionary epoch to a close; when the relationship of forces has already been tested in battles; when the revolutionary classes are already spent, but the possessing classes have not yet freed themselves from the fear: will not tomorrow bring new convulsions? Without this basic condition that is, without a preceding exhaustion of the mass energies in battles, the Bonapartist regime is in no position to develop.

Through the Papen government, the barons, the magnates of capital, and the bankers have made an attempt to safeguard their interests by means of the police and the regular army. The idea of giving up all power to Hitler, who supports himself upon the greedy and unbridled bands of the petty bourgeoisie, is a far from pleasant one to them. They do not, of course, doubt that in the long run Hitler will be a submissive instrument of their domination. Yet this is bound up with convulsions, with the risk of a long and weary civil war and great expense. To be sure, fascism, as the Italian example shows, leads in the end to a military bureaucratic dictatorship of the Bonapartist type. But for that it requires a number of years even in the event of a complete victory: a longer span of years in Germany than in Italy. It is clear that the possessing classes would prefer a more economical path, that is, the path of Schleicher and not of Hitler, not to speak of the fact that Schleicher himself prefers it that way.

The fact that the basis for the existence of the Papen government is rooted in the neutralization of the irreconcilable camps in no way signifies, of course, that the forces of the revolutionary proletariat and of the reactionary petty bourgeoisie weigh equally on the scales of history. The whole question shifts here onto the field of politics. Through the mechanism Of the Iron Front the Social Democracy paralyzes the proletariat. By the policy of brainless ultimatism the Stalinist bureaucracy blocks the revolutionary way out for the workers. With correct leadership of the proletariat, fascism would be exterminated without difficulty and not a chink could remain open for Bonapartism. Unfortunately that is not the situation. The paralyzed strength of the proletariat has assumed the deceptive form of the "strength" of the Bonapartist clique. Therein lies the political formula of the present day.

The Papen government is the featureless point of intersection of great historical forces. Its independent weight is next to nil. Therefore it can do nothing but take fright at its own gesticulations and grow dizzy at the vacuum unfolding on all sides of it. Thus and only thus can it be explained that in the deeds of the government up to now there have been two parts of cowardice to one part of audacity. In Prussia, that is, with the Social Democracy, the government played a sure game: it knew that these gentlemen would offer no resistance. But after it had dissolved the Reichstag, it announced new elections and did not dare to postpone them. After proclaiming the state of martial law, it hastened to explain: this is only in order

to facilitate the capitulation without a struggle of the Social Democratic leaders.

However, isn't there a Reichswehr? We are not inclined to forget it. Engels defined the state as armed bodies of men with material accessories in the form of prisons, etc. With respect to the present governmental power, it can even be said that only the Reichswehr really exists. But the Reichswehr seems by no means a submissive and reliable instrument in the hands of that group of people at whose head stands Papen. As a matter of fact, the government is rather a sort of political commission of the Reichswehr.

But for all its preponderance over the government, the Reichswehr nevertheless cannot lay claim to any independent political role. A hundred thousand soldiers, no matter how cohesive and steeled they may be (which is still to be tested), are incapable of commanding a nation of sixty-five million torn by the most profound social antagonisms. The Reichswehr represents only one element in the interplay of forces, and not the decisive one.

In its fashion, the new Reichswehr reflects rather well the political situation in the country that has led to the Bonapartist experiment. The parliament without a majority, with irreconcilable wings, offers an obvious and irrefutable argument in favor of dictatorship. Once more the limits of democracy emerge in all their obviousness. Where it is a question of the foundations of society itself, it is not parliamentary arithmetic that decides. What decides is the struggle.

We shall not undertake to counsel from afar what road the attempts at forming a government will take in the next days. Our hypotheses would come tardily in any case, and besides, it is not the possible transitional forms and combinations which decide the question. A bloc of the right wing with the Center would signify the "legalization" of a seizure of power by the National Socialists, that is, the most suitable cloak for the fascist coup d'etat. What relationships would develop in the early days between Hitler, Schleicher and the Center leaders is more important for them than it is for the German people. Politically, all the conceivable combinations with Hitler signify the dissolution of bureaucracy, courts, police, and army into fascism.

If it is assumed that the Center will not agree to a coalition in which it would have to pay by a rupture with its own workers for the role of a brake on Hitler's locomotive - then in this case only the open extraparlimentary road remains. A combination without the Center would more easily and speedily insure the predominance of the National Socialists. If the latter do not immediately unite with Papen and at the same time do not pass over to an immediate assault, then the Bonapartist character of the government will have to emerge more sharply: Schleicher would have his "hundred days" ... without the preceding Napoleonic years.

Hundred days - no, we are figuring far too generously. The Reichswehr does not decide. Schleicher does not suffice. The extraparlimentary dictatorship of the Junkers and the magnates of financial capital can only be assured by the method of a wearisome and relentless civil war. Will Hitler be able to fulfill this task? That depends not only upon the evil will of fascism, but also upon the revolutionary will of the proletariat.

2. BOURGEOISIE, PETTY BOURGEOISIE, AND PROLETARIAT

Any serious analysis of the political situation must take as its point of departure the mutual relations among the three classes: the bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie (including the peasantry) and the proletariat.

The economically powerful big bourgeoisie, in itself, constitutes an infinitesimal minority of the nation. To enforce its domination, it must ensure a definite mutual relationship with the petty bourgeoisie and, through its mediation, with the proletariat.

To understand the dialectics of these interrelations, we must distinguish three historical stages: the dawn of capitalist development when the bourgeoisie required revolutionary methods to solve its tasks; the period of bloom and maturity of the capitalist regime, when the bourgeoisie endowed its domination with orderly, pacific, conservative, democratic forms; finally the decline of capitalism, when the bourgeoisie is forced to resort to methods of civil war against the proletariat to protect its right of exploitation.

The political programs characteristic of these three stages Jacobinism, reformist democracy (Social Democracy included), and fascism, are basically programs of petty-bourgeois currents. This fact alone, more than anything else, shows of what tremendous - rather, of what decisive - importance the self-determination of the petty-bourgeois masses of the people is for the whole fate of bourgeois society.

Nevertheless, the relationship between the bourgeoisie and its basic social support, the petty bourgeoisie, does not at all rest upon reciprocal confidence and pacific collaboration. In its mass, the petty bourgeoisie is an exploited and oppressed class. It regards the bourgeoisie with envy and often with hatred. The bourgeoisie, on the other hand, while utilizing the support of the petty bourgeoisie, distrusts the latter, for it very correctly fears its tendency to break down the barriers set up for it from above.

While they were laying out and clearing the road for bourgeois development the Jacobins engaged, at every step, in sharp clashes with the bourgeoisie. They served it in intransigent struggle against it. After they had fulfilled their limited historical role, the Jacobins fell, for the rule of capital was predetermined.

For a whole series of stages, the bourgeoisie asserted its power under the form of parliamentary democracy. But again, not peacefully and not voluntarily. The bourgeoisie was mortally afraid of universal suffrage. But in the long run it succeeded, with the aid of a combination of repressions and concessions, with the threat of starvation coupled with measures of reform, in subordinating within the framework of formal democracy not only the old petty bourgeoisie, but in considerable measure also the proletariat by means of the new petty bourgeoisie - the labor bureaucracy. In August 1914 the imperialist bourgeoisie was able, by means of parliamentary democracy, to lead millions of workers and peasants to the slaughter.

But precisely with the war there begins the distinct decline of capitalism and above all of its democratic form of domination. It is now no longer a matter of new reforms and alms, but of cutting down and abolishing the old ones. Therewith the bourgeoisie comes into conflict not only with the institutions of proletarian democracy (trade unions and political parties) but also with parliamentary democracy, within the framework of which the workers' organizations arose. Hence the campaign against "Marxism" on the one hand and against democratic parliamentarism on the other.

But just as the summits of the liberal bourgeoisie in their time were unable, by their own force alone, to

get rid of feudalism, monarchy and the church, so the magnates of finance capital are unable, by their force alone, to cope with the proletariat. They need the support of the petty bourgeoisie. For this purpose, it must be whipped up, put on its feet mobilized, armed. But this method has its dangers. While it makes use of fascism, the bourgeoisie nevertheless fears it. Pilsudski was forced in May 1926 to save bourgeois society by a coup d'etat directed against the traditional parties of the Polish bourgeoisie. The matter went so far that the official leader of the Polish Communist Party, Warski, who came over from Rosa Luxemburg not to Lenin, but to Stalin, took the coup d'etat of Pilsudski to be the road of the "revolutionary democratic dictatorship" and called upon the workers to support Pilsudski.

At the session of the Polish Commission of the Executive Committee of the Comintern on July 2, 1926, the author of these lines said on the subject of the events in Poland:

"... the movement he [Pilsudski] headed was petty bourgeois, a 'plebeian' means of solving the pressing problems of capitalist society in process of decline and destruction. Here there is a direct parallel with Italian fascism ...

"These two currents undoubtedly have common features: their shock troops are recruited ... among the petty bourgeoisie; both Pilsudski and Mussolini operated by extraparliamentary, nakedly violent means, by the methods of civil war; both of them aimed not at overthrowing bourgeois society, but at saving it. Having raised the petty-bourgeois masses to their feet they both clashed openly with the big bourgeoisie after coming to power. Here a historical generalization involuntarily comes to mind: one is forced to recall Marx's definition of Jacobinism as a plebeian means of dealing with the feudal enemies of the bourgeoisie. That was in the epoch of the rise of the bourgeoisie. It must be said that now, in the epoch of the decline of bourgeois society, the bourgeoisie once again has need of a 'plebeian' means of solving its problems - which are no longer progressive but rather, thoroughly reactionary. In this sense, then, fascism contains a reactionary caricature of Jacobinism ...

"The bourgeoisie in decline is incapable of maintaining itself in power with the methods and means of its own creation - the parliamentary state. It needs fascism as a weapon of self-defense, at least at the most critical moments. The bourgeoisie does not like the 'plebeian' means of solving its problems. It had an extremely hostile attitude toward Jacobinism which cleared a path in blood for the development of bourgeois society. The fascists are immeasurably closer to the bourgeois in decline than the Jacobins were to the bourgeoisie on the rise. But the established bourgeoisie does not like the fascist means of solving its problems either, for the shocks and disturbances, although in the interests of bourgeois society, involve dangers for it as well. This is the source of the antagonism between fascism and the traditional parties of the bourgeoisie ...

"The big bourgeoisie dislikes this method, much as a man with a swollen jaw dislikes having his teeth pulled. The respectable circles of bourgeois society viewed with hatred the services of the dentist Pilsudski, but in the end they gave in to the inevitable, to be sure, with threats of resistance and much haggling and wrangling over the price. And lo, the petty bourgeoisie's idol of yesterday has been transformed into the gendarme of capital!"(

To this attempt at defining the historical place of fascism as the political replacement for the Social Democracy, there was counterposed the theory of social fascism. At first it could appear as a pretentious, blustering, but harmless stupidity. Subsequent events have shown what a pernicious influence the Stalinist theory actually exercised on the entire development of the Communist International.((

Does it follow from the historical role of Jacobinism, of democracy, and of fascism that the petty bourgeoisie is condemned to remain a tool in the hands of capital to the end of its days? If things were so, then the dictatorship of the proletariat would be impossible in a number of countries in which the petty bourgeoisie constitutes the majority of the nation; and more than that, it would be rendered extremely difficult in other countries in which the petty bourgeoisie represents an important minority. Fortunately, things are not so. The experience of the Paris Commune first showed, at least within the limits of one city, just as the experience of the October Revolution has shown after it on a much larger scale and over an incomparably longer period, that the alliance of the petty bourgeoisie and the big bourgeoisie is not indissoluble. Since the petty bourgeoisie is incapable of an independent policy (that is also why the petty-bourgeois "democratic dictatorship" is unrealizable) no choice is left for it other than that between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

In the epoch of the rise, the sprouting and blooming of capitalism, the petty bourgeoisie, despite acute outbreaks of discontent, generally marched obediently in the capitalist harness. Nor could it do anything else. But under the conditions of capitalist disintegration and the impasse in the economic situation, the petty bourgeoisie strives, seeks, and attempts to tear itself loose from the fetters of the old masters and rulers of society. It is quite capable of linking its fate with that of the proletariat. For that, only one thing is needed: the petty bourgeoisie must acquire faith in the ability of the proletariat to lead society onto a new road. The proletariat can inspire this faith only by its strength, by the firmness of its actions, by a skillful offensive against the enemy, by the success of its revolutionary policy.

But woe if the revolutionary party does not measure up to the situation! The daily struggle of the proletariat sharpens the instability of bourgeois society. The strikes and the political disturbances aggravate the economic situation of the country. The petty bourgeoisie could reconcile itself temporarily to the growing privations, if it came through experience to the conviction that the proletariat is in a position to lead it onto a new road. But if the revolutionary party, in spite of a class struggle becoming incessantly more accentuated, proves time and again to be incapable of uniting the working class behind it if it vacillates, becomes confused, contradicts itself, then the petty bourgeoisie loses patience and begins to look upon the revolutionary workers as those responsible for its own misery. All the bourgeois parties, including the Social Democracy, turn its thoughts in this very direction. When the social crisis takes on an intolerable acuteness, a particular party appears on the scene with the direct aim of agitating the petty bourgeoisie to a white heat and of directing its hatred and its despair against the proletariat. In Germany, this historic function is fulfilled by National Socialism, a broad current whose ideology is composed of all the putrid vapors of decomposing bourgeois society.

The principal political responsibility for the growth of fascism rests, of course, on the shoulders of the Social Democracy. Ever since the imperialist war, the labors of this party have been reduced to uprooting from the consciousness of the proletariat the idea of an independent policy, to implanting within it the belief in the eternity of capitalism, and to forcing it to its knees time and again before the decadent bourgeoisie. The petty bourgeoisie can follow the worker only when it sees in him the new chief. The Social Democracy teaches the worker to be a lackey. The petty bourgeoisie will not follow a lackey. The policy of reformism deprives the proletariat of the possibility of leading the plebeian masses of the petty bourgeoisie and thereby converts the latter into cannon fodder for fascism.

The political question, however, is not settled for us with the responsibility of the Social Democracy. Ever since the beginning of the war we have denounced this party as the agency of the imperialist bourgeoisie within the ranks of the proletariat. Out of this new orientation of the revolutionary Marxists

arose the Third International. Its task consisted in uniting the proletariat under the banner of the revolution and thereby securing for it the directing influence over the oppressed masses of the petty bourgeoisie in the towns and the countryside.

The postwar period, in Germany more than anywhere else, was an epoch of economic hopelessness and civil war. The international conditions as well as the domestic ones pushed the country peremptorily on the road to socialism. Every step of the Social Democracy revealed its decadence and its impotence, the reactionary import of its politics, the venality of its leaders. What other conditions are needed for the development of the Communist Party? And yet, after the first few years of significant successes, German Communism entered into an era of vacillations, zigzags, alternate turns to opportunism and adventurism. The centrist bureaucracy has systematically weakened the proletarian vanguard and prevented it from bringing the class under its leadership. Thus it has robbed the proletariat as a whole of the possibility of leading behind it the oppressed masses of the petty bourgeoisie. The Stalinist bureaucracy bears the direct and immediate responsibility for the growth of fascism before the proletarian vanguard.

3. AN ALLIANCE OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY WITH FASCISM OR A STRUGGLE BETWEEN THEM?

To understand the interrelationship of the classes in the form of a schema, fixed once and for all, is comparatively simple. The evaluation of the concrete relations between the classes in every given situation is immeasurably more difficult.

The German big bourgeoisie is at present vacillating - a condition which the big bourgeoisie, in general, very rarely experiences. One part has definitely come to be convinced of the inevitability of the fascist path and would like to accelerate the operation. The other part hopes to become master of the situation with the aid of a Bonapartist military police dictatorship. No one in this camp desires a return to the Weimar "democracy."

The petty bourgeoisie is split up. National Socialism, which has united the overwhelming majority of the intermediate classes under its banner, wants to take the whole power into its own hands. The democratic wing of the petty bourgeoisie, which still has millions of workers behind it wants a return to democracy according to the Ebertian model. In the meantime, it is prepared to support the Bonapartist dictatorship at least passively. The Social Democracy figures as follows: under the pressure of the Nazis, the Papen-Schleicher government will be forced to establish a balance by strengthening its left wing; meanwhile, the crisis will perhaps subside; the petty bourgeoisie will perhaps sober up; capitalism will perhaps decrease its frantic pressure upon the working class - and with the aid of God everything will once again be in order.

The Bonapartist clique actually commences by oppressing the support of the Social Democracy within certain counts. But for it is impossible to tolerate the worker's organizations, which these conceivably will, at least to

road for Papen and that the semi-toleration of Papen will accelerate the arrival of Hitler. That is entirely correct. Within these limits, there are no differences of opinion between ourselves and the Stalinists. But this precisely signifies that in times of social crisis the politics of reformism no longer turns against the masses alone but against itself. In this process the critical moment has just now arrived.

Hitler tolerates Schleicher. The Social Democracy does not oppose Papen. If this situation could really be assured for a long period of time, then the Social Democracy would become transformed into the left wing of Bonapartism and leave to fascism the role of the right wing. Theoretically, it is not, of course, excluded that the present unprecedented crisis of German capitalism will lead to no conclusive solution, i.e., will end with neither the victory of the proletariat nor the triumph of the fascist counterrevolution. If the Communist Party continues its policy of stupid ultimatism and thereby saves the Social Democracy from inevitable collapse; if Hitler does not in the near future decide upon a coup d'etat and thereby initiate the inevitable disintegration within his own ranks; if the economic conjuncture takes an upward turn before Schleicher falls - then the Bonapartist combination of Paragraph 48 of the Weimar Constitution, of the Reichswehr, the semi-oppositional Social Democracy, and semi-oppositional fascism could perhaps maintain itself (until a new social outburst which is to be expected in any case).

But offhand, we are still far from such a happy fulfillment of the conditions that form the subject of Social Democratic daydreams. Such a thing is by no means assured. Even the Stalinists hardly believe in the power of resistance or the durability of the Papen-Schleicher regime. All signs point to the breakup of the Wels-Schleicher-Hitler triangle even before it has begun to take shape.

But perhaps it will be replaced by a Hitler-Wels combination? According to Stalin they are "twins, not antipodes." Let us assume that the Social Democracy would, without fearing its own workers, want to sell its toleration to Hitler. But Hitler does not need this commodity: he needs not the toleration but the abolition of the Social Democracy. The Hitler government can only accomplish its task by breaking the resistance of the proletariat and by removing all the possible organs of its resistance. Therein lies the historical role of fascism.

The Stalinists confine themselves to a purely psychological, or more exactly, to a purely moral evaluation of those cowardly and avaricious petty bourgeois who lead the Social Democracy. Can we actually assume that these inveterate traitors would separate themselves from the bourgeoisie and oppose it? Such an idealist method has very little in common with Marxism, which proceeds not from what people think about themselves or what they desire but from the conditions in which they are placed and from the changes which these conditions will undergo.

The Social Democracy supports the bourgeois regime, not for the profits of the coal, steel, and other magnates, but for the sake of those gains which it itself can obtain as a party, in the shape of its numerically great and powerful apparatus. To be sure, fascism in no way threatens the bourgeois regime, for the defense of which the Social Democracy exists. But fascism endangers that role which the Social Democracy fulfills in the bourgeois regime and the income which the Social Democracy derives from playing its role. Even though the Stalinists forget this side of the matter, the Social Democracy itself does not for one moment lose sight of the mortal danger with which a victory of fascism threatens it - not the bourgeoisie, but it - the Social Democracy.

About three years ago, when we pointed out that the point of departure in the coming political crisis in Austria and in Germany would in all probability be fixed by the incompatibility of Social Democracy and fascism; when, on this basis, we rejected the theory of social fascism, which was not disclosing but

concealing the approaching conflict; when we called attention to the possibility that the Social Democracy, and a significant part of its apparatus along with it, would be forced by the march of events into a struggle against fascism and that this would be a favorable point of departure for the Communist Party for a further attack, a great many Communists - not only hired functionaries, but even quite honest revolutionists - accused us of ... "idealizing" the Social Democracy. Nothing remained but to shrug our shoulders. It is hard to dispute with people whose thought stops there where the question first begins for a Marxist.

In conversations, I often cited the following example: the Jewish bourgeoisie in Czarist Russia represented an extremely frightened and demoralized part of the entire Russian bourgeoisie. And yet, insofar as the pogroms of the Black Hundreds, which were in the main directed against the Jewish poor, also hit the bourgeoisie, the latter was forced to defend itself. To be sure, it did not show any remarkable bravery on this field either. But due to the danger hanging over their heads, the liberal Jewish bourgeoisie, for example, collected considerable sums for the arming of revolutionary workers and students. In this manner, a temporary practical agreement was arrived at between the most revolutionary workers, who were prepared to fight with guns in hand, and the most frightened group of the bourgeoisie, which had got into a scrape.

Last year I wrote that in the struggle against fascism the Communists were duty-bound to come to a practical agreement not only with the devil and his grandmother, but even with Grzesinsky. This sentence made its way through the entire Stalinist world press. Was better proof needed of the "social fascism" of the Left Opposition? Many comrades had warned me in advance: "They are going to seize on this phrase." I answered them, "It has been written so they will seize on it. Just let them seize upon this hot iron and burn their fingers. The blockheads must get their lesson."

The course of the struggle has led to Papen acquainting Grzesinsky with the inside of a jail. Did this episode follow from the theory of social fascism and from the prognoses of the Stalinist bureaucracy? No, it occurred in complete contradiction of the latter. Our evaluation of the situation, however, had such an eventuality in view and had assigned a definite place for it.

But the Social Democracy this time, too, avoided the struggle, some Stalinist will object. Yes, it did avoid it. Whoever expected the Social Democracy to go beyond the urging of its leaders and take up the struggle independently, and at that under conditions in which even the Communist Party showed itself incapable of struggle, naturally had to experience disappointment. We did not expect such miracles. Therefore we could not lay ourselves open to any "disappointments" about the Social Democracy.

Grzesinsky has not become transformed into a revolutionary tiger; that we will readily grant. But nevertheless, there is quite a difference between a situation in which Grzesinsky, sitting in his fortress, sends out police detachments for the safeguarding of "democracy" against revolutionary workers, and a situation in which the Bonapartist savior of capitalism puts Grzesinsky himself in jail, is there not? And are we not to take this difference into account politically; are we not to take advantage of it?

Let us turn back to the example cited above: it is not hard to grasp the difference between a Jewish manufacturer who tips the Czarist policeman to beat down the strikers and the same manufacturer who turns over money to the strikers of yesterday to obtain arms against the pogromists. The bourgeois remains the same. But from the change in the situation there results a change in relations. The Bolsheviks conducted the strike against the manufacturer. Later on, they took money from the same manufacturer for the struggle against the pogroms. That did not, naturally, prevent the workers, when their hour had come,

from turning their arms against the bourgeoisie.

Does all that has been said mean that the Social Democracy as a whole will fight against fascism? To this we reply: part of the Social Democratic functionaries will undoubtedly go over to the fascists; a considerable section will creep under their beds in the hour of danger. The working masses also will not fight in their entirety. To guess in advance what part of the Social Democratic workers will be drawn into the struggle and when, and what part of the apparatus they will take along with them, is altogether impossible. That depends upon many circumstances, among them the position of the Communist Party. The policy of the united front has as its task to separate those who want to fight from those who do not; to push forward those who vacillate; and finally to compromise the capitulationist leaders in the eyes of the workers, to consolidate the workers' fighting capacity.

How much time has been lost - aimlessly, senselessly, shamefully! How much could have been achieved, even in the last two years alone! Was it not clear in advance that monopoly capital and its fascist army would drive the Social Democracy with fists and blackjacks onto the road of opposition and self-defense? This prognosis should have been displayed before the entire working class, the initiative should have been taken for the united front, and this initiative should have been kept firmly in our hands at every new stage. It was not necessary to shout or scream; it was possible to play quietly with a sure hand. It would have sufficed to formulate, in a clear-cut manner, the inevitability of every next step of the enemy and to set up a practical program for a united front, without exaggerations and without haggling, but also without weakness and without concessions. How high the Communist Party would stand today if it had assimilated the ABC of Leninist policy and applied it with the necessary perseverance!

4. THAELMANN'S TWENTY-ONE MISTAKES

In the middle of July appeared a pamphlet with Thaelmann's answers to twenty-one questions by Social Democratic workers on how the "red united front" is to be created. The pamphlet begins with the words: "Mightily the antifascist united front rushes ahead!" On July 20 the Communist Party called upon the workers to come out in a political strike. The appeal met with no response. Thus within five days was the tragic abyss revealed between bureaucratic rhetoric and political reality.

The party received 5.3 million votes in the elections of July 31. By trumpeting forth this result as a tremendous victory, the party showed how greatly the defeats have diminished its claims and hopes. In the first balloting for the presidential election, on March 13, the party received almost 5 million votes. In the course of four and a half months - and what months! - it therefore gained barely 300,000 votes. The Communist press repeated hundreds of times in March that the number of votes would have been incomparably larger had it been a Reichstag election: in a presidential election, hundreds of thousands of sympathizers deemed it superfluous to lose any time over a "platonic" demonstration. If this March commentary is taken into consideration - and it deserves to be taken into consideration - it follows that the party has practically not grown at all in the last four and a half months.

In April, the Social Democracy elected Hindenburg, who thereupon carried out a coup d'etat aimed directly against it. One would think that this fact alone ought to have sufficed to convulse the structure of reformism to its very foundations. Add to this the further aggravation of the crisis with all its frightful consequences. Finally, on July 20, eleven days before the elections, the Social Democracy drew its tail miserably between its legs at the coup d'etat of the federal president it elected. In such periods,

revolutionary parties grow feverishly. Whatever the Social Democracy, forced into a steel vise, may yet undertake to do, it must drive the workers away from it to the left. But instead of striding forward with seven-league boots, Communism marks time, vacillates, is on the retreat, and after each step forward it takes half a step backward. To exult over a victory only because the Communist Party suffered no loss of votes on July 31, is to lose the sense of reality entirely.

In order to understand why and how the revolutionary party condemns itself to a debasing impotence under exceptionally favorable political conditions, one must read Thaelmann's answers to the Social Democratic workers. A wearisome and unpleasant job, but it may enlighten one on what is taking place in the minds of the Stalinist leaders.

To the question "How do the Communists evaluate the character of the Papen government?" Thaelmann gives several mutually contradictory replies. He begins with a reference to "the danger of the immediate establishment of the fascist dictatorship." Then it follows that it does not yet exist? He speaks with complete accuracy of the government members as "representatives of trust capital, of the generals and of Junkerdom." A minute later he says about the same government: "this fascist cabinet" and concludes his reply with the assertion that "the Papen government ... has set itself the aim of the immediate establishment of the fascist dictatorship."

By disregarding the social and political distinctions between Bonapartism, that is, the regime of "civil peace" resting upon military-police dictatorship, and fascism, that is, the regime of open civil war against the proletariat, Thaelmann deprives himself in advance of the possibility of understanding what is taking place before his very eyes. If Papen's cabinet is a fascist cabinet, then what fascist "danger" is he talking about? If the workers will believe Thaelmann that Papen sets himself the aim (!) of establishing the fascist dictatorship, then the probable conflict between Hitler and Papen-Schleicher will catch the party napping just as the conflict between Papen and Otto Braun did in its time.(

To the question "Is the Communist Party of Germany sincere about the united front?" Thaelmann naturally answers affirmatively, and for proof he refers to the fact that the Communists do not go hat in hand to Hindenburg and Papen. "No, we put the question of the struggle, of the struggle against the whole system, against capitalism. And here lies the kernel of the sincerity of our united front."

Thaelmann manifestly does not understand what it is all about. The Social Democratic workers remain Social Democrats precisely because they still believe in the gradual, reformist road to the transformation of capitalism into socialism. Since they know that the Communists stand for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, the Social Democratic workers ask: "Do you sincerely propose the united front to us?" To this Thaelmann replies: "Naturally, sincerely, for with us it is a question of overthrowing the whole capitalist system."

Of course we don't dream of concealing anything from the Social Democratic workers. Nevertheless, one must know the measure of things and preserve the political proportions. A

skilled propagandist should have answered in the following manner: "You put your stakes on democracy; we believe that the only way out lies in the revolution. Yet we cannot and we do not want to make the revolution without you. Hitler is now the common foe. After the victory over him we shall draw the balance together with you and see where the road ahead actually leads."

The audience in the Thaelmann pamphlet peculiar as this may seem at first sight not only listens forbearingly to the speaker but even agrees with him many times. The secret of their forbearance,

however, rests upon the fact that Thaelmann's partners in the conversation not only belong to the "Antifascist Action" but also call for the casting of votes for the Communist Party. They are former Social Democrats who have gone over to the side of Communism. Such recruits can only be welcomed. But what is deceptive in the whole affair is that a conversation with workers who have broken with the Social Democracy is palmed off as a conversation with the Social Democratic mass. This cheap masquerade is highly characteristic of the whole present-day policy of Thaelmann & Co.!

At any rate, the former Social Democrats put questions which actually agitate the Social Democratic mass. "Is the Antifascist Action a front organization of the Communist Party?" they ask. Thaelmann

come to us "by the millions," without leaving your fascist party. "Lack of clarity about certain questions" cannot constitute an obstacle. But alas, the lack of clarity in the heads of the all-powerful bureaucrats is an obstacle at every step.

To give depth to the question, Thaelmann proceeds to say: "We do not put the question as between parties, but on a class basis." Like Seydewitz, Thaelmann is prepared to renounce party interests in the interests of the class. The misfortune lies in this, that for a Marxist there cannot be such a contrast. Were not its program the scientific formulation of the interests of the working class, the party would not be worth a penny.

Only, along with the crude mistake in principle, Thaelmann's words contain also a practical absurdity. How is it possible not to put the question of relations between parties when that is just where the very essence of the question lies? Millions of workers follow the Social Democracy. Other millions - the Communist Party. To the Social Democratic workers who ask how we shall today achieve joint actions between your party and ours against fascism, Thaelmann answers: "On a class and not a party basis" stream toward us by the millions. Isn't this the most wretched bombast?

"We Communists," continues Thaelmann, "do not want unity at any price." We cannot, in the interest of unity with the Social Democracy, "disavow the class content of our policy ... and renounce strikes, struggles of the unemployed, actions of the tenants and revolutionary mass defense." The agreement on definite practical actions is misconstrued into an absurd unity with the Social Democracy. Out of the indispensability of the final revolutionary assault of tomorrow, is deduced the impermissibility of joint strike or self-defense actions for today. Whoever can see rhyme or reason in Thaelmann's thoughts deserves a prize.

Thaelmann's listeners insist: "Is an alliance of the KPD and the SPD possible in the struggle against the Papen government and against fascism?" Thaelmann mentions two or three facts as evidence that the Social Democracy does not fight against fascism and concludes: "Every SPD comrade will say we are right when we say that an alliance between the KPD and the SPD is impossible on the basis of these facts and also for reasons of principle[!]." The bureaucrat again assumes the thing that should be proved. Ultimatism acquires a particularly ludicrous character as soon as Thaelmann replies to the question of the united front with organizations which embrace millions of workers. The Social Democrats must acknowledge that an agreement with their party is impossible because it is fascist. Can Wels and Leipart be rendered a better service?

"We Communists, who reject any accord with the SPD leaders ... repeatedly declare that we are at all times ready for the antifascist struggle with the militant Social Democratic and Reichsbanner comrades and with the lower [?] militant organizations." Where do the lower organizations stop? And what is to be done if the lower organizations submit to the discipline of the upper, and propose that the negotiations shall be begun with the latter? Finally, between the lower and the upper there are intermediate stories. And can one prophesy where the dividing line will be between those who want to fight and those who dodge the struggle? This can be determined only in action and not by anticipatory appraisals. What sense is there in binding oneself hand and foot?

In Die Rote Fahne of July 29, in a report of a Reichsbanner meeting, the noteworthy words of a Social Democratic company commander are mentioned: "The will to an antifascist united front exists in the masses. If the leaders fail to take it into account, then I will go to the united front over their heads." The Communist paper reproduces These words without comment. Yet they contain the key to the whole tactic

of the united front. The Social Democrat wants to fight against the fascists in common with the Communists. He is already in doubt about the goodwill of his leaders. If the leaders refuse, says he, then I shall go over their heads. Social Democrats similarly disposed can be counted by the dozens, hundreds, thousands, millions. It is the task of the Communist Party to really show them whether or not the Social Democratic leaders want to fight. This can be demonstrated only through experience, through a new, fresh experience, in a new situation. This experience will not be gained at one blow. The Social Democratic leaders must be subjected to a test: in the factory and workshop, in town and country, in the whole nation, today and tomorrow. We must repeat our proposal, put it in a new form, from a new angle, adapted to the new situation.

But Thaelmann will have none of it. On the basis of the "differences in principle shown to exist between the KPD and the SPD we reject negotiations from the top with the SPD." This shattering argument is repeated by Thaelmann several times. But if there were no "antagonisms in principle" then there would be no two parties. And if there were no two parties, there would be no question of the united front. Thaelmann wants to prove far too much. Less - would be better.

Did not the founding of the RGO, ask the workers, signify "a splitting of the organized working class?" No, replies Thaelmann, and as proof he cites Engels's letter of 1895 against the aesthetic-sentimental philanthropists. Who is treacherously handing Thaelmann such quotations? The RGO is created in the spirit of unity and not of schism. Also, the worker is in no case to leave his trade-union organization in order to join the RGO. On the contrary, it were better if the RGO members remained in the trade unions in order to carry on oppositional work therein. Thaelmann's words may sound convincing to Communists who have set themselves the task of fighting against the Social Democratic leadership. But as an answer to Social Democratic workers, who are concerned With trade-union unity, Thaelmann's words sound like a mockery.

"Why have you left our trade unions and organized yourselves separately?" ask the Social Democratic workers.

"If you want to enter our separate organization in order to fight against the Social Democratic leadership, we do not demand that you leave the trade unions," Thaelmann replies. An appropriate reply, right on the head of the nail!

"Is there democracy within the KPD?" ask the workers, passing over to another theme. Thaelmann replies in the affirmative. Absolutely! But he immediately adds unexpectedly: "In legality as well as in illegality, most particularly in the latter, the party must be on guard against spies, provocateurs, and police agents." This interpolation is not made accidentally. The latest doctrine, proclaimed throughout the world in the brochure of a mysterious Buechner, justifies the strangulation of democracy in the interest of the struggle against spies. Whoever protests against the autocracy of the Stalinist bureaucracy must be declared a suspicious character at the very least. The police agents and provocateurs of every country revel with enthusiasm over this theory. They will hound Oppositionists louder than anyone else: this may divert attention from themselves and enable them to fish in troubled waters.

The flourishing of democracy is also demonstrated, according to Thaelmann, by the fact that "the problems are dealt with at World Congresses and Conferences of the ECCI." The speaker fails to report when the last World Congress took place. We will call it to mind: in July 1928, more than four years ago! Apparently no noteworthy questions have arisen since then. Why, let it be asked in passing, doesn't Thaelmann himself convoke an extraordinary German party convention to resolve the questions upon

which the fate of the German proletariat depends? Certainly not because of an excess of party democracy.

So runs page after page. Thaelmann replies to twenty-one questions. Every reply a mistake. In sum, twenty-one mistakes, not counting the small and secondary ones. And they are numerous.

Thaelmann relates that the Bolsheviks broke with the Mensheviks in 1903. In reality, the split first took place in 1912. But even that did not prevent the February Revolution in 1917 from finding united Bolshevik and Menshevik organizations over a large part of the country. As late as the beginning of April, Stalin came out for the unification of the Bolsheviks with Tseretelli's party - not the united front but the fusion of the parties! This was prevented only by Lenin's arrival.

Thaelmann says that the Bolsheviks dispersed the Constituent Assembly in 1917. In reality this occurred at the beginning of 1918. Thaelmann is not at all familiar with the history of the Russian Revolution and the Bolshevik Party.

Far worse, however, is the fact that he does not grasp the foundations of the Bolshevik tactic. In his "theoretical" articles, he even dares to dispute the fact that the Bolsheviks concluded an agreement with the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries against Kornilov. As proof, he adduces quotations shoved under his door by somebody or other, which have nothing to do with the matter. But he forgets to answer the questions: were there Committees for the Defense of the People throughout the land during the Kornilov putsch? Did they direct the struggle against Kornilov? Did representatives of the Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, and Social Revolutionaries belong to these committees? Yes, yes, yes. Were the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries in power at that time? Did they persecute the Bolsheviks as agents of the German general staff? Were thousands of Bolsheviks confined to prisons? Did Lenin hide in illegality? Yes, yes, yes. What quotations can refute these historical facts?

Let Thaelmann appeal to his heart's content to Manuilsky, Lozovsky, and Stalin himself (if the latter ever opens his mouth). But let him leave in peace Leninism and the history of the Russian Revolution: for him they are books sealed with seven seals.

In conclusion one must throw into relief still another question, which stands by itself: it concerns Versailles. The Social Democratic workers ask if the Communist Party isn't making political concessions to National Socialism. In his reply, Thaelmann continues to defend the slogan of "national emancipation" and to place it on the same plane with the slogan of social emancipation. The reparations - what is left of them now - are just as important to Thaelmann as private ownership of the means of production. One could say this policy was contrived uniquely to divert the attention of the workers from the basic problem, to weaken the blow against capitalism, and to compel one to seek the principal foe and author of poverty on the other side of the frontier. However, now more than ever before, "the main enemy is at home!" Schleicher expressed this idea even more coarsely: before anything else, he declared on the radio on July 26, we must "put an end to the dirty swine at home!" This soldier's formula is very good. We pick it up willingly. Every Communist must firmly adopt it as his own. While the Nazis divert attention to Versailles, the Communist workers must retort to them with Schleicher's words: no, before anything else we must put an end to the dirty swine at home!

5. THE CHECKING OF THE STALIN-THAELEMAN POLICY AGAINST THEIR OWN EXPERIENCE

Tactics are tested in the most critical and crucial moments. The strength of Bolshevism rested upon this, that its slogans and methods found their supreme confirmation in the course of the revolution and the struggle for power. The tactics of the Soviet Government were tested in the most critical moments of the revolution and the struggle for power. The tactics of the Soviet Government were tested in the most critical moments of the revolution and the struggle for power. The tactics of the Soviet Government were tested in the most critical moments of the revolution and the struggle for power.

To explain these goat-leaps, however, is not so difficult. As is known, many superficial liberals and radicals continue to joke all their lives about religion and celestial powers, only to call for a priest when they face death or serious illness. So also in politics. The mark of centrism is opportunism. Under the influence of external circumstances (tradition, mass pressure, political competition), centrism is at certain times compelled to make a parade of radicalism. For this purpose it must overcome itself, violate its political nature. By spurring itself on with all its strength, it not infrequently lands at the extreme limit of formal radicalism. But hardly does the hour of serious danger strike than the true nature of centrism breaks out to the surface. In so delicate a question as the defense of the Soviet Union the Stalinist bureaucracy always built much more upon the bourgeois pacifists, British trade-union bureaucrats, and French Radicals than upon the revolutionary movement of the proletariat. Scarcely did an external danger approach than the Stalinists promptly sacrificed not only their ultraleftist phrases but also the vital interests of the international revolution - in the name of amity with uncertain and false "friends" of the genus of lawyers, writers, and simple drawing room heroes. United front from above? Under no circumstances! At the same time, however, the Top Commissar for Ambiguous Affairs, Muenzenberg by name, went tugging at the coattails of all sorts of liberal jabberers and radical scribblers "for the defense of the USSR."

The Stalinist bureaucracy in Germany, as in every other country - except the Soviet Union - is extremely dissatisfied with the compromising leadership of Barbusse in the affair of the Antiwar Congress. On this field, Thaelmann, Foster, and others would prefer to be radical. Yet in their own national affairs, every one of them proceeds according to the same model as the Moscow authorities: at the approach of a serious danger they cast off the inflated, falsified radicalism in order to reveal their true, that is, their opportunistic nature.

Was the initiative of the Communist Landtag fraction, as such, false and inadmissible? We don't think so. The Bolsheviks more than once proposed to the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries in 1917: "Take the power, we will support you against the bourgeoisie if it should resist." Compromises are admissible and, under certain conditions, obligatory. The whole question lies in what aim the compromise shall serve; how it looks to the masses; what its limits are. To confine the compromise to the Landtag or the Reichstag, to regard as an independent aim whether the president will be a Social Democrat or a Catholic democrat instead of a fascist, means to sink completely into parliamentary cretinism. The situation is completely different when the party sets itself the task of the systematic and planned struggle for the Social Democratic workers on the basis of the united-front policy. A parliamentary agreement against fascist predominance in the presidium, etc., would in this case constitute merely one component part of the extraparlimentary fighting agreement against fascism. Naturally the Communist Party would prefer to resolve the whole question at one blow outside of parliament But preferences alone are not sufficient where the forces are lacking. The Social Democratic workers have demonstrated their faith in the magic power of the July 31 vote. It is from this fact that we must proceed. The former mistakes of the Communist Party (Prussian referendum, and so on) facilitated extraordinarily well the sabotage of the united front practiced by the reformist leaders. A technical parliamentary agreement - or even just the proposal for such an agreement - must help free the Communist Party from the accusation that it is collaborating with the fascists against the Social Democracy. This is no independent action, but solely the clearing of the road to a fighting agreement or at least to the struggle for a fighting agreement of the mass organizations.

The difference between the two lines is entirely obvious. The joint struggle with the Social Democratic organizations can, and in its unfolding it must assume a revolutionary character. The possibility for an

approach to the Social Democratic masses can and must be paid for, under certain conditions, even with parliamentary agreements at the top. But for a Bolshevik, this is merely the admission price. The Stalinist bureaucracy acts in the opposite manner: it not only rejects fighting agreements, but still worse, it maliciously destroys those agreements which arise from below. At the same time, it proposes to the Social Democratic deputies a parliamentary accord. This means that at the moment of danger it declares its own ultraleftist theory and praxis to be worthless; yet it is replaced not with the policy of revolutionary Marxism but with an unprincipled parliamentary combination in the spirit of the "lesser evil."

We will indeed be told the Prussian and Hessian episodes were a mistake of the deputies and were made good again by the Central Committee. In the first place, a decision so important in principle should not have been taken without the Central Committee: the mistake falls back completely upon the latter as well; in the second place: how explain that the "steel-hard," "consistent," "Bolshevik" policy, after months of blustering and screeching, of polemic, of vilification and expulsions, at once gives way at the critical moment to an opportunist "mistake"?

But the matter is not confined to the Landtag. Thaelmann-Remmele have absolutely renounced themselves and their own school on a much more important and critical question. On the eve of July 20, the Central Committee of the Communist Party adopted the following decision:

"The Communist Party, before the proletarian public, addresses to the SPD, to the ADGB, and to the AfA-Bund the question if they are prepared to carry out, together with the Communist Party, a general strike for the proletarian demands." This decision, so important and unexpected, was made public by the Central Committee in its circular letter of July 26 without any commentary. Can a more annihilating judgment be made of its whole preceding policy? The approach to the reformist summits with the proposal of joint actions was but yesterday declared to be social fascist and counterrevolutionary. Because of this question Communists were expelled. On this ground the struggle against "Trotskyism" was conducted. How then was this Central Committee suddenly able, at one stroke, on the eve of July 20, to bow before what it had the day before banished? And to what tragic state has the bureaucracy brought the party when the Central Committee could dare to come before it with its amazing decision without explaining or justifying it!

The policy is tested upon such turns. The Central Committee of the German Communist Party in reality demonstrated to the whole world on the eve of July 20: "Up to this moment our course was good for nothing." An involuntary but completely correct admission. Unfortunately, even the proposal of July 20, which overthrew the preceding policy, could in no case yield a positive result. An appeal to the summits - independently of the present answer of these summits - can become of revolutionary significance only when it has been previously prepared from below, that is, when it is based upon the whole policy in its totality. But the Stalinist bureaucracy repeated to the Social Democratic workers, day in and day out: "We Communists reject any connection with the SPD leaders (see Thaelmann's answers in the preceding section). The unprepared, unexpected, unmotivated proposal of July 20 was suitable only for exposing the Communist leadership by revealing its inconsistency, lack of seriousness, inclination to panic and adventuristic leaps.

The policy of the centrist bureaucracy helps the adversary at every step. Even when the mighty pressure of events drives a hundred thousand new workers under the Communist banner, it takes place in spite of the Stalin-Thaelmann policy. Precisely because of this the future of the party is in no way assured.

6. WHAT THEY SAY IN PRAGUE ABOUT THE UNITED FRONT

"When the Communist International made a united front with the Social Democratic leaders in 1926," wrote the central organ of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party, Rude Pravo, on February 27, 1932, allegedly in the name of a worker-correspondent "from the bench," "it did this in order to expose them before the masses of supporters, and at that time Trotsky was terribly opposed to it Now, when the Social Democracy has so discredited itself by its countless betrayals of the workers' struggles, Trotsky proposes the united front with its leaders ... Trotsky is today against the Anglo-Russian Committee of 1926, but for any sort of Anglo - Russian Committee of 1932."

These lines lead us right to the heart of the question. In 1926, the Comintern sought to "expose" the reformist leaders with the aid of the united-front policy, and that was right But since then the Social Democracy has "discredited" itself. Before whom? There are still more workers following it than follow the Communist Party. This is sad but true. The problem of exposing the reformist leaders thus remains unsolved. If the method of the united front was good in 1926, why should it be bad in 1932?

"Trotsky is for an Anglo-Russian Committee of 1932, against the Anglo-Russian Committee of 1926." In 1926, the united front was concluded only at the top, between the leaders of the Soviet trade unions and the British trade unionists, not in the name of definite practical actions of the masses separated from each other by state frontiers and social conditions, but upon the basis of a friendly-diplomatic, pacifist-evasive "platform." During the miners' strike, and later the general strike, the Anglo-Russian Committee could not even come together, for the "allies" pulled in two opposite directions: the Soviet trade unions strove to assist the strikers, the British trade unionists sought to break the strike. The substantial contributions collected by the Russian workers were rejected by the General Council as "damned Russian gold." Only after the strike had been finally betrayed and broken did the Anglo-Russian Committee come together again to the scheduled banquet to exchange small talk. Thus did the policy of the Anglo-Russian Committee serve to cover up the reformist strikebreakers before the working masses.

At the present time we are speaking of something quite different. In Germany the Social Democratic and the Communist workers stand on the same ground, before the same danger. They mingle with each other in factories, in trade unions, at the unemployment registries, etc. It is not a question here of a verbal "platform" of the leaders, but of thoroughly concrete tasks which are calculated to draw the mass organizations directly into the struggle.

The united-front policy on a national scale is ten times harder than on a local scale. The united-front policy on an international scale is a hundred times harder than on a national scale. To unite with the British reformists around so general a slogan as "defense of the USSR⁷ or "defense of the Chinese Revolution" is the talk the blue out of the sky. In Germany, on the contrary, there is the immediate danger of the destruction of the workers' organizations, the Social Democratic included. To expect the Social Democracy to fight for the defense of the Soviet Union against the German bourgeoisie would be an illusion. But we certainly can expect that the Social Democracy will fight for the defense of its mandates, its meetings, periodicals, treasuries, and finally for its own head.

Only, even in Germany we in no way advocate lapsing into a united-front fetishism. An agreement is art agreement It remains in effect so long as it serves the practical goal for which it was concluded. If the reformists begin to curb or to sabotage the movement the Communists must always put to themselves the question: is it not time to tear up the agreement and to lead the masses further under our own banner?

Such a policy is not an easy one. But who has ever argued that to lead the proletariat to victory is a simple task? By counterposing the year 1926 to the year 1932, Rude Pravo has demonstrated only its lack of comprehension of what occurred six years ago as well as of what is happening today.

The "worker-correspondent" from the imaginary bench also turns his attention to the example I gave of the agreement of the Bolsheviks with the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries. "All that time," he writes, "Kerensky really fought for a certain time against Kornilov and at the same time helped the proletariat smash Kornilov. That the German Social Democracy today does not fight against fascism is evident to any little child."

Thaelmann, who in no way resembles a "little child," contends that an agreement of the Russian Bolsheviks with the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries never even existed. Rude Pravo, as we see, pursues a different course. The agreement it does not deny. But according to its conception, the agreement was justified by this, that Kerensky really fought against Kornilov, in contradistinction to the Social Democracy, which is preparing the road to power for fascism. The idealization of Kerensky here is quite astounding. When did Kerensky begin to fight against Kornilov? At the very moment when Kornilov swung the Cossack's saber over Kerensky's own head, that is, on the eve of August 26, 1917. On the previous day, Kerensky was still in a direct conspiracy with Kornilov, with the aim of jointly crushing the Petrograd workers and soldiers. If Kerensky began to "fight" against Kornilov or, more correctly, to offer no resistance for a time to the fight against Kornilov, then it was only because the Bolsheviks left him no other alternative. That Kornilov and Kerensky, both of them conspirators, broke with each other and came into open conflict, was to a certain extent a surprise. That it would have to come to a collision between German fascism and the Social Democracy, could and should have been foreseen, if only on the basis of the Italian and Polish experiences. Why could an agreement with Kerensky against Kornilov have been concluded, and why is it forbidden to preach, to fight for, to advocate, and to prepare an agreement with the Social Democratic mass organizations? Why must such agreements be destroyed wherever they have come into being? That, however, is just how Thaelmann & Co. proceed.

Rude Pravo naturally pounced ravenously upon my words that an agreement on fighting actions may be made with the devil, with his grandmother, and even with Noske and Grzesinsky. "Look, Communist workers," writes the paper, "you've got to come to terms with Grzesinsky who has already shot so many of your comrades-in-arms. Come to an agreement with him for he is to fight together with you against the fascists, with whom he hobnobs at banquets and on the boards of directors of factories and banks." The whole question is shifted here onto the plane of spurious sentimentality. Such an objection is worthy of an anarchist or an old Russian Left Social Revolutionary, a "revolutionary pacifist," or of Muenzenberg himself. There isn't a glimmer of Marxism in it.

First of all: is it correct that Grzesinsky is a workers' hangman? Absolutely correct. But wasn't Kerensky a hangman of the workers and peasants in far greater measure than Grzesinsky? Nevertheless, Rude Pravo approves after the fact the practical agreement with Kerensky.

To support the hangman in every action directed against the workers is a crime, if not treachery: that is just what the alliance of Stalin with Chiang Kai-shek consisted of. But if this same Chinese hangman were to find himself engaged tomorrow in a war with the Japanese imperialists, then practical fighting agreements of the Chinese workers with the hangman Chiang Kai-shek would be quite permissible and even - a duty.

Did Grzesinsky hobnob with the fascists at banquets? I do not know, but I'm quite prepared to grant it. Only, Grzesinsky was subsequently obliged to sit in the Berlin prison, not in the name of socialism, it is true, but only because he was loath to give up his warm seat to the Bonapartists and the fascists. Had the Communist Party openly declared at least a year ago: against the fascist assassins we are prepared to fight jointly even with Grzesinsky; had it invested this formula with a fighting character, developed it in speeches and articles, brought it into the depths of the masses - Grzesinsky would have been unable to defend before the masses his capitulation in July with references to the sabotage of the Communist Party. He would either have had to go along with this or that active step or else expose himself hopelessly in the eyes of his own workers. Isn't this clear?

To be sure, even if Grzesinsky were drawn into the struggle by the logic of his situation and the pressure of the masses, he would be an extremely unreliable, a thoroughly perfidious ally. His principal thought would be to pass over as quickly as possible from struggle or half-struggle to an agreement with the capitalists. But the masses set into motion, even the Social Democratic masses, do not come to a halt as easily as do outraged police chiefs. The rapprochement of the Social Democratic and the Communist workers in the process of the struggle would offer the Communist Party leaders a far broader possibility for influencing the Social Democratic workers, especially in face of the common danger. And that is precisely the final aim of the united front.

To reduce the whole policy of the proletariat to agreements with the reformist organizations or, still worse, to the abstract slogan of "unity," is something that only spineless centrists of the stripe of the SAP can do. For the Marxists, the united front policy is merely one of the methods in the course of the class struggle. Under certain conditions this method becomes completely useless; it would be absurd to want to conclude an agreement with the reformists to achieve the socialist upheaval. But there are conditions under which the rejection of the united front may ruin the revolutionary party for many decades to come. That is the situation in Germany at the present time.

The policy of the united front on the international scale, as we have said above, faces even more difficulties and dangers, for there the formulation of the practical tasks and the organization of control by the masses is harder. That is so above all in the question of the struggle against war. The prospects of joint actions are far slighter here, the possibilities of subterfuge and deception by the reformists and pacifists are far greater. By this, of course, we do not contend that the united front in this field is out of the question. On the contrary, we demanded that the Comintern should turn directly and immediately to the Second and the Amsterdam Internationals with the proposal for a joint antiwar congress. It would then have been the task of the Comintern to work out the most concrete possible obligations, applicable to the various countries and differing circumstances. Were the Social Democracy compelled to agree to such a congress, the problem of war, providing there were a correct policy on our side, could be driven into its ranks like a sharp wedge.

The first premise for this: utmost clarity, political as well as organizational. There is involved an agreement of proletarian, million-membered organizations, which are today still divided by deep antagonisms in principle. No ambiguous intermediaries, no diplomatic masqueradings and hollow pacifist formulas!

The Comintern, however, found it proper this time also to act counter to the ABC of Marxism: while it refused to enter into open negotiations with the reformist Internationals, it opened up negotiations behind the scenes with Friedrich Adler through the medium ... of the pacifist literary gentleman and first-class

muddlehead, Henri Barbusse. As a result of this policy, Barbusse gathered together in Amsterdam half-hidden Communist or "related," "sympathizing" organizations and groups, together with the pacifist free-lancers of all countries. The most honest and sincere among the latter - and they are the minority - can each say for himself. "Me and my confusion." Who needed this masquerade, this bazaar of intellectualistic conceit, this Muenzenbergerie, which turns into downright political charlatanry?*

But let us return to Prague. Five months after the appearance of the article discussed above, the same journal printed the article of one of the party leaders, Klement Gottwald, which bears the character of an appeal to the Czechoslovakian workers of the different tendencies to make righting agreements, The fascist danger menaces all of Central Europe: the onslaught of the reaction can be beaten off only by the

themselves: 'Now we know how serious are the intentions of the Communists on the united front.'"

Here you have the genuine voice of a worker. Such a voice contributes more to the solution of the question than dozens of articles by unprincipled pen-pushers. As a matter of fact, Breitscheid did not propose any united front. He only frightened the bourgeoisie with the possibility of joint actions with the Communists. Had the Central Committee of the Communist Party promptly put the question right on the edge of the knife, the Social Democratic Party leadership would have been pushed into a difficult position. But the Central Committee of the Communist Party hastened, as always, to put itself into a difficult position.

In the pamphlet *What Next?* I happened to write on Breitscheid's speech: "Isn't it self-evident that Breitscheid's diplomatic and equivocal offer should have been grabbed with both hands; and that from one's own side, one should have submitted a concrete, carefully detailed, and practical program for a joint struggle against fascism and demanded joint sessions of the executives of both parties, with the participation of the executives of the Free Trade Unions? Simultaneously, one should have carried this same program energetically down through all the layers of both parties and of the masses."

By spurning the trial balloon of the reformist leaders, the Central Committee of the Communist Party transformed in the minds of the workers the ambiguous assertion of Breitscheid into a direct united-front proposal and prompted the Social Democratic workers to the conclusion: "Our people want joint actions, but the Communists are sabotaging." Can one imagine a more stupid and inappropriate policy? Could Breitscheid's maneuver be better supported? The letter from the Prague printer demonstrates with remarkable plainness that with Thaelmann's aid, Breitscheid completely attained his goal.

Rude Pravo endeavors to perceive contradiction and confusion in the fact that in one case we reject an agreement, but in another, we acknowledge it and deem it necessary to determine anew each time the scope, the slogans, and the methods of the agreement. Rude Pravo does not understand that in politics, as in all other serious fields, one must know well: what; when, where, and how. Also it cannot hurt to understand: why.

In *The Third International After Lenin*, written four years ago, we set down a few elementary rules for the united-front policy. We consider it worthwhile to recall them here:

"The possibility of betrayal is always contained in reformism. But this does not mean to say that reformism and betrayal are one and the same thing at every moment. Not quite. Temporary agreements may be made with the reformists whenever they take a step forward. But to maintain a bloc with them when, frightened by the development of a movement they commit treason, is equivalent to criminal toleration of traitors and a veiling of betrayal (*The Third International After Lenin*, page 129).

"The most important best established, and most unalterable rule to apply in every maneuver reads: you must never dare to merge, mix, or combine your own party organization with an alien one, even though the latter be most 'sympathetic' today. Undertake no such steps as lead directly or indirectly, openly or maskedly, to the subordination of your party to other parties, or to organizations of other classes, or constrict the freedom of your own agitation, or your responsibility, even if only in part, for the political line of other parties. You shall not mix up the banners, let alone kneel before another banner" (*ibid.*, page 140).

Today, after the experience with the Barbusse Congress, we would add still another rule:

"Agreements should be reached only openly, before the eyes of the masses, from party to party, from organization to organization. You shall not avail yourself of equivocal middlemen. You shall not palm off diplomatic affairs with bourgeois pacifists as a proletarian united front."

7. THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE LIGHT OF THE ECONOMIC CYCLE

If we have insistently demanded that a distinction be made between fascism and Bonapartism, it has not been out of theoretical pedantry. Names are used to distinguish between concepts; concepts, in politics, in turn serve to distinguish among real forces. The smashing of fascism would leave no room for Bonapartism and, it is to be hoped, would mean the direct introduction to the social revolution.

Only - the proletariat is not armed for the revolution. The reciprocal relations between Social Democracy and the Bonapartist government on the one hand, and between Bonapartism and fascism on the other - while they do not decide the fundamental questions - distinguish by what roads and in what tempo the struggle between the proletariat and the fascist counterrevolution will be prepared. The contradictions between Schleicher, Hitler, and Weis, in the given situation, render more difficult the victory of fascism, and open for the Communist Party a new credit, the most valuable of all - a credit in time.

"Fascism will come to power by the cold method." We have heard this more than once from the Stalinist theoreticians. This formula means that the fascists will come to power legally, peacefully, through a coalition - without needing an open upheaval. Events have already refuted this prognosis. The Papen government came to power through a coup d'etat, and it complemented it with a coup d'etat in Prussia. Even if we assume that a coalition between the Nazis and the Center would overthrow the Bonapartist Papen government with "constitutional methods, in and of itself this still decides nothing. Between the peaceful assumption of power by Hitler and the establishment of the fascist regime there still lies a long way. A coalition would only facilitate the coup d'etat, but not replace it. Along with the final abolition of the Weimar Constitution there would still remain the most important task - the abolition of the organs of proletarian democracy. From this point of view, what does the "cold method" mean? Nothing other than the lack of resistance on the part of the workers. Papen's Bonapartist coup d'etat remained in fact unpunished. Will Hitler's fascist upheaval also remain unpunished? It is precisely around this question that, consciously or unconsciously, the guessing about the "cold method" turns.

If the Communist Party represented an overwhelming force, and if the proletariat were to march forward for the immediate seizure of power, all the contradictions in the camp of the possessing classes would temporarily be wiped out - fascists, Bonapartists, and democrats would stand in one front against the proletarian revolution. But this is not the case. The weaknesses of the Communist Party and the division of the proletariat permit the possessing classes and the parties which serve them to carry their contradictions out into the open. Only by supporting itself on these contradictions will the Communist Party be able to strengthen itself.

But perhaps fascism in highly industrialized Germany will altogether decide not to validate its claims for full power? Undoubtedly, the German proletariat is incomparably more numerous and potentially stronger than the Italian. Although fascism in Germany represents a more numerous and better organized camp than in Italy at the corresponding period, still the task of liquidating "Marxism" must appear both difficult and risky to the German fascists. In addition, it is not excluded that Hitler's political peak has already been passed. The all too long period of waiting and the new barrier on its road in the shape of Bonapartism, undoubtedly weaken fascism, intensify its internal frictions, and might materially weaken

its pressure. But here we enter a domain of tendencies which at the present moment cannot be calculated in advance. Only the living struggle can answer these questions. To build in advance on the assumption that National Socialism will inevitably stop halfway would be most frivolous.

The theory of the "cold method," carried to its conclusion, is not in the least better than the theory of social fascism; more accurately, it only represents the obverse of that theory. The contradictions among the constituents of the enemy's camp are in both cases completely neglected, the successive stages of the process blurred. The Communist Party is left completely on the side. Not for nothing was the theoretician of the "cold method," Hirsch, at the same time the theoretician of social fascism.

The political crisis of the country develops on the foundation of the economic crisis. But economy too is not immovable. If yesterday we were obliged to say that the cyclical crisis only sharpens the fundamental, organic crisis of the capitalist system, so today we must recall that the general decline of capitalism does not exclude cyclical fluctuations. The present crisis will not last forever. The hopes of the capitalist world for a turn in the crisis are exaggerated to the utmost, but not groundless. The question of the struggle of political forces must be incorporated into the economic perspectives. Papen's program makes this all the more impossible to postpone, since the program starts from the assumption of an approaching economic improvement.

The industrial revival steps on the scene for everyone to see as soon as it expresses itself in the form of growing turnover of goods, rising production, increased number of employed workers. But it does not begin in that way. The revival is preceded by preparatory processes in the field of money circulation and of credit. The capital invested in unprofitable undertakings and branches of industry must be released and receive the form of liquid money which seeks investment. The market, freed of its fatty deposits, growths, and swellings, must show a real demand. The entrepreneurs must gain 'confidence in the market and in each other. On the other hand, the 'confidence of which the world press speaks so much must be spurred on, not only by economic, but also by political factors (reparations, war debts, disarmament - rearmament, etc.).

A rise in the turnover of goods, in production, in the number of employed workers, is nowhere to be seen as yet; on the contrary, the decline continues. As for the processes preparatory to a turn in the crisis, they have obviously fulfilled the greater part of the tasks assigned to them. Many signs really permit us to assume that the moment of turn in the economic cycle has drawn close, if it is not immediately before us. That is the estimation, seen on a world scale.

But we must draw a distinction between the creditor countries (the United States, Britain, France) and the debtor countries, or more accurately the bankrupt countries; the first place in the latter group is occupied by Germany. Germany has no liquid capital. Its economy can receive an impetus only through an influx of capital from outside. But a country which is not in condition to pay its old debts receives no loans. In any case, before the creditors open their moneybags they must be convinced that Germany is again in condition to export a greater amount than it needs to import; the difference has to serve to cover the debts. The demand for German goods is to be expected primarily from the agrarian countries, in the first instance from Southeastern Europe. The agrarian countries, for their part, depend on the demand of the industrial countries for raw materials and foodstuffs. Germany will therefore be forced to wait; the stream of life will first have to flow through the series of its capitalist competitors and its agrarian partners before it affects Germany's own economic performance.

But the German bourgeoisie cannot wait. Still less can the Bonapartist clique wait. While it promises not

to touch the stability of the currency, the Papen government is introducing a material inflation. Together with speeches on the rebirth of economic liberalism, it assumes the administrative disposition over the economic cycle; in the name of the freedom of private initiative it subordinates the taxpayers directly to the capitalist entrepreneurs.

The axis around which the government program turns is the hope of a nearby turn in the crisis. If this does not take place soon, the two billions will evaporate like two drops of water on a red-hot stove. Papen's plan has immeasurably more of a gambling, speculative character than the bullish movement which is currently taking place on the New York Stock Exchange. In any case, the consequences of a collapse of the Bonapartist gamble will be far more catastrophic.

The most immediate and tangible result of the gap between the plans of the government and the actual movement of the market will consist in the slipping of the mark. The social evils, increased by inflation, will assume an intolerable character. The bankruptcy of the Papen economic program will demand its replacement by another and more effective program. Which one? Obviously the program of fascism. Once the attempt to force a recovery through Bonapartist therapy has failed, it must be tried with fascist surgery. Social Democracy in the meantime will make "left" gestures and fall to pieces. The Communist Party, if it does not put obstacles in its own way, will grow. All in all, this will mean a revolutionary situation. The question of the prospects for victory under these circumstances is three-fourths a question of Communist strategy.

But the revolutionary party must also be prepared for another prospect, that of a quicker appearance of a turn in the crisis. Let us assume that the Schleicher-Papen government were to succeed in maintaining itself until the beginning of a revival in commerce and industry. Would it be saved thereby? No, the beginning of an upward movement in business would mean the certain end of Bonapartism and might even mean more.

The forces of the German proletariat are not exhausted. But they have been undermined by sacrifices, defeats, and disappointments, beginning with 1914, by the systematic betrayals of the Social Democracy, by the discredit which the Communist Party has heaped upon itself. Six or seven million unemployed are a heavy load dragging on the feet of the proletariat. The emergency decrees of Bruening and Papen have found no resistance. The coup d'etat of July 20 has remained unpunished.

We can predict with full assurance that an upward turn in the cycle would give a powerful impetus to the activity of the proletariat at present in decline. At the moment when the factory stops discharging workers and takes on new ones, the self-confidence of the workers is strengthened; they are once again necessary. The compressed springs begin to expand again. Workers always enter into the struggle for the reconquest of lost positions more easily than for the conquest of new ones. And the German workers have lost too much. Neither emergency decrees nor the use of the Reichswehr will be able to liquidate mass strikes which develop on the wave of the upturn. The Bonapartist regime, which is able to maintain itself only through the "social truce," will be the first victim of the upturn in the cycle.

A growth of strike struggles is already to be observed in various countries (Belgium, Britain, Poland, in part in the United States, but not Germany). An evaluation of the mass strikes now developing, in the light of the worldwide economic cycle, is not an easy task. Statistics are inevitably slow to reveal fluctuations in the business cycle. The revival must become a fact before it can be registered. The workers usually sense the revival of economic life earlier than the statisticians. New orders or even the expectation of new orders, reorganization of enterprises for expansion of production or at least the

interruption of the discharge of workers, immediately increase the powers of resistance and the demands of the workers. The defensive strike of the textile workers in Lancashire was unquestionably called forth by a certain upturn in the textile industry. As for the Belgian strike, it is obviously taking place on the basis of the still deepening crisis of the coal mining industry. The transitional and critical character of the present phase of the world economic cycle corresponds to the variety of the economic impulses which are the basis of the most recent strikes. But in general the growth of the mass movement rather tends to indicate the existence of an upward trend which is about to become perceptible. In any case, a real revival of economic activity, even in its first stages, will call forth a broad upsurge of the mass struggle.

The ruling classes of all countries expect miracles from the industrial upswing; the speculation in stocks which has already broken out is a proof of this. If capitalism were really to enter upon the phase of a new prosperity or even of a gradual but persistent rise, this would naturally involve the stabilization of capitalism, accompanied by a weakening of fascism, and a simultaneous reinforcement of reformism. But there is not the least ground for the hope or fear that the economic revival, which in and of itself is inevitable, will be able to overcome the general tendencies of decay in world economy and in European economy in particular. If prewar capitalism developed under the formula of expanded production of goods, present-day capitalism, with all its cyclical fluctuations, represents an expanded production of misery and of catastrophes. The new economic cycle will entail the inevitable readjustment of forces within the individual countries as well as within the capitalist camp as a whole, predominantly toward America and away from Europe. But within a very short time it will confront the capitalist world with insoluble contradictions and condemn it to new and still more frightful convulsions.

Without the risk of error, we can make the following prognosis: the economic revival will suffice to strengthen the self-confidence of the workers and give a new impetus to their struggle, but it will in no way suffice to give capitalism, and particularly European capitalism, the possibility of rebirth.

The practical conquests which the new cyclical upturn in declining capitalism will open to the workers' movement will necessarily bear a most limited character. Will German capitalism, at the height of the new revival in economic activity, be able to restore those conditions for the working class which existed before the present crisis? Everything compels us to answer this question in advance with "No." All the more quickly will the awakened mass movement have to strike out along the political road.

Even the very first step of the industrial revival will be most dangerous for Social Democracy. The workers will throw themselves into struggle to win back what they have lost. The leaders of the Social Democracy will again base their hopes on the restoration of the "normal" order. Their main consideration will be the restoration of their fitness to join a coalition government. Leaders and masses will pull in opposite directions. In order to exploit to the limit the new crisis of reformism, the Communists need a correct orientation in the cyclical changes and the preparation sufficiently ahead of time of a practical program of action, beginning first of all with the losses suffered by the workers during the years of crisis. The transition from economic struggles to political ones will constitute an especially suitable moment for the strengthening of the power and influence of the revolutionary proletarian party.

But success in this field as in others can be achieved only under one condition - the correct application of the policy of the united front. For the Communist Party of Germany this means, before anything else: an end to the present policy of sitting between two stools in the trade-union field; a firm course toward the Free Trade Unions, drawing the present cadres of the RGO into their ranks; the opening of a systematic struggle for influence on the shop councils by means of the trade unions; and the preparation of a broad

campaign under the slogan of workers' control of production.

8. THE ROAD TO SOCIALISM

Kautsky and Hilferding, among others, have declared more than once in recent years that they never shared the theory of the collapse of capitalism which the revisionists once ascribed to the Marxists and which the Kautskyists themselves now frequently attribute to the Communists.

The Bernsteinians outlined two perspectives: one, unreal, allegedly orthodox "Marxist," according to which in the long run, under the influence of the internal contradictions of capitalism, its mechanical collapse was supposed to take place; and the second, "realistic," according to which a gradual evolution from capitalism to socialism was to be accomplished. Antithetical as these two schemas may be at first glance, they are nevertheless united by a common trait: the absence of the revolutionary factor. While they disavowed the caricature of the automatic collapse of capitalism attributed to them, the Marxists demonstrated that, under the influence of the sharpening class struggle, the proletariat would carry through the revolution long before the objective contradictions of capitalism could lead to its automatic collapse.

This dispute was carried on as long ago as the end of the Past century. It must however be acknowledged that the capitalist reality since the war approached, in a certain respect much closer to the Bernsteinian caricature of Marxism than anyone might ever have assumed - least of all the revisionists themselves, since they had only portrayed the specter of the collapse in order to bring out its unreality. Nevertheless, capitalism proves in actuality to be closer to automatic decay the more delayed is the revolutionary intervention of the proletariat in the destiny of society.

The most important component of the theory of collapse was the theory of pauperization. The Marxists contended, with some prudence, that the sharpening of social contradictions need not signify unconditionally an absolute drop in the standard of living of the masses. But in reality, it is precisely this latter process which is unfolding. Wherein could the collapse of capitalism express itself more acutely than in chronic unemployment and the destruction of social insurance, that is, the refusal of the social order to feed its own slaves?

The opportunistic brakes in the working class have proved to be powerful enough to grant the elemental forces of outlived capitalism additional decades of life. As a result, it is not the idyll of the peaceful transformation of capitalism into socialism which has taken place, but a state of affairs infinitely closer to social decay.

The reformists sought for a long time to shift the responsibility for the present state of society onto the war. But in the first place, the war did not create the destructive tendencies of capitalism, but only brought them to the surface and accelerated them; secondly, the war would have been unable to accomplish its work of destruction without the political support of reformism; thirdly, the hopeless contradictions of capitalism are preparing new wars from various sides. Reformism will be unable to shift the historical responsibility from itself. By paralyzing and curbing the revolutionary energy of the proletariat, the international Social Democracy invests the process of the capitalist collapse with the blindest, most unbridled, catastrophic, and bloody forms.

Of course, one cannot speak of a realization of the revisionist caricature of Marxism except conditionally, in applying it to some given historical period. The way out of decaying capitalism,

however, will be found, even if after a great delay, not upon the road of the automatic collapse but upon the revolutionary road.

The present crisis has swept ;aside with a final flourish of the broom the remnants of the reformist utopias. Opportunist practice at the present time possesses no theoretical covering whatsoever. For in the long run it is pretty much a matter of indifference to Wels, Hilferding, Grzesinsky, and Noske how many catastrophes will still hurtle down upon the heads of the masses of the people, if only their own interests remain immune. Only, the point is that the crisis of the bourgeois regime strikes at the reformist leaders, too.

"Act, state, intervene!" the Social Democracy still cried a short while ago, as it fell back before fascism. And the state acted: Otto Braun and Severing were kicked into the street. Now, wrote the Vorwaerts, everybody must recognize the advantages of democracy over the regime of dictatorship. Yes, democracy has substantial advantages, reflected Grzesinsky while he made the acquaintance of prison from the inside.

From this experience resulted the conclusion: "It is time to proceed to socialization!" Tarnow, yesterday still a doctor of capitalism, suddenly decided to become its gravedigger. Now, when capitalism has turned the reformist ministers, police chiefs, and lord lieutenants into unemployed, it has manifestly exhausted itself. Wels writes a programmatic article, "The hour of socialism has struck!" There only remains for Schleicher to rob the deputies of their salary and the former ministers of their pension - and Hilferding will write a study on the historic role of the general strike. The "left turn of the Social Democratic leaders startles one with its stupidity and deceitfulness. This by no means signifies, however, that the maneuver is condemned in advance to failure. This party, laden with crimes, still stands at the head of millions. It will not fall of its own accord. One must know how to overthrow it.

The Communist Party will declare that the Wels-Tarnow course towards socialism is a new form of mass deception, and that will be correct. It will relate the history of the Social Democratic "socializations" of the last fourteen years. That will be useful. But it is insufficient: history, even the most recent, cannot take the place of active politics.

Tarnow seeks to reduce the question of the revolutionary or the reformist road to socialism to the simple question of the "tempo" of the transformations. Deeper a theoretician cannot sink. The tempo of socialist transformations depends in reality upon the state of the productive forces of the country, its culture, the extent of the overhead imposed upon it for defense, etc. But socialist transformations, the speedy as well as the slow, are possible only if at the summits of society stands a class interested in socialism, and at the head of this class a party which does not dupe the exploited, and which is always ready to suppress the resistance of the exploiters. We must explain to the workers that precisely in that consists the regime of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Only, even this does not suffice. Once it is a question of the burning problems of the world proletarian one should not - as the Comintern does - forget the fact of the existence of the Soviet Union. With regard to Germany, the task today does not lie in beginning socialist construction for the first time, but in tying together Germany's productive forces, its culture, its technical and organizational genius with the socialist construction already in process in the Soviet Union.

The German Communist Party confines itself to the mere eulogizing of Soviet successes, and in this connection commits gross and dangerous exaggerations. But it is completely incapable of linking

together the socialist construction in the USSR, its enormous experiences and valuable achievements, with the tasks of the proletarian revolution in Germany. The Stalinist bureaucracy, for its part, is least of all in a position to render the German Communist Party any assistance in this highly important matter: its perspectives are limited to one single country.

The incoherent and cowardly state-capitalistic projects of the Social Democracy must be countered with a general plan for the joint socialist construction of the USSR and Germany. Nobody demands that a detailed plan should be worked out instantly. A preliminary rough draft suffices. Foundation pillars are necessary. This plan must be made the object of action as speedily as possible by every organization of the German working class, primarily of its trade unions.

The progressive forces among the German technicians, statisticians, and economists must be drawn into this action. The discussions about planned economy so widespread in Germany, reflecting the hopelessness of German capitalism, remain purely academic, bureaucratic, lifeless, pedantic. The Communist vanguard alone is capable of lifting the treatment of the question out of the vicious circle.

Socialist construction is already in progress - to continue this work a bridge must be thrown over the state frontiers. Here is the first plan: study it, improve it, make it concrete! Workers, elect special planning commissions, charge them with entering into liaison with the trade unions and economic Organs of the Soviets. On the basis of the German trade unions, the factory councils, and other labor organizations, create a central planning commission which has the job of liaison with the Gosplan of the USSR. Draw into this work German engineers, organizers, economists!

This is the only correct approach to the question of planned economy, today, in the year 1932, after fifteen years of existence of the Soviets, after fourteen years of convulsions in the German capitalist republic.

Nothing is easier than to ridicule the Social Democratic bureaucracy, beginning with Wels, who has struck up a Song of Solomon to socialism. Yet it must not be forgotten that the reformist workers have a thoroughly serious attitude to the question of socialism. One must have a serious attitude to the reformist workers. Here the problem of the united front rises up once again in its full scope.

If the Social Democracy sets itself the task (only in words, we know), not to save capitalism but to build up socialism, then it must seek an agreement not with the Center but with the Communists. Will the Communist Party reject such an agreement? By no means. On the contrary, it will itself propose such an agreement, demand it before the masses as a redemption of the just-signed socialist promissory note.

The attack of the Communist Party upon the Social Democracy must proceed at the present time along three lines. The task of demolishing fascism retains all its acuteness. The decisive battle of the proletariat against fascism will signal the simultaneous collision with the Bonapartist state apparatus. This makes the general strike an indispensable fighting weapon. It must be prepared. A special general strike plan must be worked out, that is, a plan for the mobilization of the forces to carry it out. Proceeding from this plan, a mass campaign must be unfolded, on the basis of which an agreement for carrying out the general strike under well-defined political conditions may be proposed to the Social Democracy. Repeated and made concrete at every new stage, this proposal will lead in the process of its development to the creation of the soviets as the highest organs of the united front.

That Papen's economic plan, which has now become law, brings the German proletariat unprecedented poverty, is recognized in words also by the leaders of the Social Democracy and the trade unions. In the

press, they express themselves with a vehemence they have not voiced for a long time. Between their words and their deeds lies an abyss; we know that very well - but we must understand how to pin them down to their word. A system of joint measures of struggle must be elaborated against the regime of emergency decrees and Bonapartism. This struggle imposed upon the proletariat by the whole situation cannot, by its very nature, be conducted within the framework of democracy. A situation where Hitler possesses an army of 400,000 men, Papen-Schleicher, besides the Reichswehr, the semi-private Stahlhelm army of 200,000 men, the bourgeois democracy the half-tolerated Reichsbanner army, the Communist Party the proscribed Red Front army - such a situation by itself lays bare the problem of the state as a problem of power. A better revolutionary school cannot be imagined!

The Communist Party must say to the working class: Schleicher is not to be overthrown by any parliamentary game. If the Social Democracy wants to set to work to overthrow the Bonapartist government with other means, the Communist Party is ready to aid the Social Democracy with all its strength. At the same time, the Communists obligate themselves in advance to use no violent methods against a Social Democratic government insofar as the latter bases itself upon the majority of the working class and insofar as it guarantees the Communist Party the freedom of agitation and organization. Such a way of putting the question will be comprehensible to every Social Democratic and nonparty worker.

The third line, finally, is the fight for socialism. Here too the iron must be forged while it is hot and the Social Democracy pressed to the wall with a concrete plan of collaboration with the USSR. What is necessary on this point has already been said above.

Naturally, these sectors of struggle, which are of varying significance in the complete strategical perspective, are not separated from each other, but rather overlap and merge. The political crisis of society demands the combining of the partial questions with the general questions: precisely therein lies the essence of the revolutionary situation.

9. THE ONLY ROAD

Can it be expected that the Central Committee of the Communist Party will independently accomplish a turn to the right road? Its whole past demonstrates that it is incapable of doing this.

Hardly had it begun to rectify itself than the apparatus saw before it the perspective of "Trotskyism." If Thaelmann himself did not grasp it immediately, then he was told from Moscow that the "part" must be sacrificed for the sake of the "whole," that is, the interests of the German revolution for the sake of the interests of the Stalinist apparatus. The abashed attempts to revise the policy were once more withdrawn. The bureaucratic reaction triumphed again all along the line.

It is not of course, a matter of Thaelmann. Were the present-day Comintern to give its sections the possibility of living, of thinking, and of developing themselves, they would long ago, in the last fifteen years, have been able to select their own leading cadres. But the bureaucracy erected instead a system of appointed leaders and their support by means of artificial ballyhoo. Thaelmann is a product of this system and at the same time its victim.

The cadres, paralyzed in their development weaken the party. They supplement their inadequacy with repressions. The vacillations and the Uncertainty of the party are inexorably transmitted to the class as a whole. The masses cannot be summoned to bold actions when the party itself is robbed of revolutionary determination.

Even if Thaelmann were to receive tomorrow a telegram from Manuilsky on the necessity of a turn to the path of the united front policy, the new zigzag at the top would bring little good. The leadership is too compromised. A correct policy demands a healthy regime. Party democracy, at present a plaything of the bureaucracy, must rise again as a reality. The party must become a party; then the masses will believe it. Practically, this means to put upon the order of the day an extraordinary party convention and an extraordinary congress of the Comintern.

The party convention must naturally be preceded by a thorough discussion. All apparatus barriers must be razed. Every party organization, every nucleus has the right to call to its meetings and listen to every Communist, member of the party or expelled from it if it considers this necessary for the working out of its opinion. The press must be put at the service of the discussion; adequate space must be allotted daily for critical articles in every party paper. Special press commissions, elected at mass meetings of the party members, must see to it that the papers serve the party and not the bureaucracy.

The discussion, it is true, will require no little time and energy. The apparatus will argue: how can the party permit itself the "luxury of discussion" at such a critical period? The bureaucratic saviors believe that under difficult conditions the party must shut up. The Marxists, on the contrary, believe that the more difficult the situation, the more important the independent role of the party.

The leadership of the Bolshevik Party enjoyed, in 1917, a very grism never accommodated itself to "pure" democracy, now supplementing it with a regime of open repression, now substituting one for it; (b) that "pure" finance capitalism nowhere exists; (c) that even while occupying a dominant position, finance capital does not act within a void and is obliged to reckon with the other strata of the bourgeoisie and with the resistance of the oppressed classes; (d) that, finally, between parliamentary democracy and the fascist regime a series of transitional forms, one after another, inevitably interposes itself, now "peaceably," now by civil war. And each one of these transitional forms, if we want to go forward and not be flung to the rear, demands a correct theoretical appraisal and a corresponding policy of the proletariat.

On the basis of the German experience, the Bolshevik-Leninists recorded for the first time the transitional governmental form (even though it could and should already have been established on the basis of Italy) which we called Bonapartism (the Bruening, Papen, Schleicher governments). In a more precise and more developed form, we subsequently observed the Bonapartist regime in Austria. The determinism of this transitional form has become patent, naturally not in the fatalistic but in the dialectical sense, that is, for the countries and periods where fascism, with growing success, without encountering a victorious resistance of the proletariat, attacked the positions of parliamentary democracy in order thereupon to strangle the proletariat.

During the period of Bruening-Schleicher, Manuilsky-Kuusinen proclaimed: "Fascism is already here"; the theory of the intermediate, Bonapartist stage they declared to be an attempt to paint over and mask fascism in order to make easier for the Social Democracy the policy of the "lesser evil." At that time the Social Democrats were called social fascists, and the "left" Social Democrats of the Zyromsky-Marceau Pivert-Just type passed - after the "Trotskyists" - for the most dangerous social fascists. All this has changed now. With regard to present-day France, the Stalinists do not dare to repeat: 'Fascism is already here; on the contrary, they have accepted the policy of the united front, which they rejected yesterday, in order to prevent the victory of fascism in France. They have found themselves compelled to distinguish the Doumergue regime from the fascist regime. But they have arrived at this distinction as empiricists

and not as Marxists. They do not even attempt to give a scientific Definition of the Doumergue regime. He who operates in the domain of theory with abstract categories is condemned to capitulate blindly to facts. And yet it is precisely in France that the passage from parliamentarism to Bonapartism (or more exactly, the first stage of this passage) has taken on a particularly striking and demonstrative character. It suffices to recall that the Doumergue government appeared on the scene between the rehearsal of the civil war by the fascists (February 6) and the general strike of the proletariat (February 12). As soon as the irreconcilable camps had taken up their fighting positions at the poles of capitalist society, it wasn't long before it became clear that the adding machine of parliamentarism lost all importance. It is true that the Doumergue government like the Bruening-Schleicher governments in their day, appears at first glance to govern with the assent of parliament. But it is a parliament which has abdicated, a parliament which knows that in case of resistance the government would dispense with it. Thanks to the relative equilibrium between the camp of counterrevolution which attacks and the camp of the revolution which defends itself, thanks to their temporary mutual neutralization, the axis of power has been raised above the classes and above their parliamentary representation. It was necessary to seek the head of the government outside of parliament and "outside the parties." The head of the government has called two generals to his aid. This trinity has supported itself on its right and its left by symmetrically arranged parliamentary hostages. The government does not appear as an executive organ of the parliamentary majority, but as a judge-arbiter between two camps in struggle.

A government which raises itself above the nation is not, however, suspended in air. The true axis of the present government passes through the police, the bureaucracy, the military clique. It is a military-police dictatorship with which we are confronted, barely concealed with the decorations of parliamentarism. But a government of the saber as the judge arbiter of the nation - that's just what Bonapartism is.

The saber by itself has no independent program. It is the instrument of "order." It is summoned to safeguard what exists. Raising itself politically above the classes, Bonapartism, like its predecessor Caesarism, for that matter, represents in the social sense, always and at all epochs, the government of the strongest and firmest part of the exploiters; consequently, present-day Bonapartism can be nothing else than the government of finance capital which directs, inspires, and corrupts the summits of the bureaucracy, the police, the officers' caste, and the press.

The "constitutional reform" about which so much has been said in the course of recent months, has as its sole task the adaptation of the state institutions to the exigencies and conveniences of the Bonapartist government. Finance capital is seeking legal paths that would give it the possibility of each time imposing upon the nation the most suitable judge-arbiter with the forced assent of the quasi-parliament. It is evident that the Doumergue government is not the ideal of a "strong government" More suitable candidates for a Bonaparte exist in reserve. New experiences and combinations are possible in this domain if the future course of the class struggle is to leave them enough time.

In prognosticating, we are obliged to repeat what the Bolshevik-Leninists said at one time about Germany: the political chances of present French Bonapartism are not great; its stability is determined by the temporary and at bottom unsteady equilibrium between the camps of the proletariat and fascism. The relation of forces of these two camps must change rapidly, in part under the influence of the economic conjuncture, principally in dependence upon the quality of the proletarian vanguard's policy. The collision between these two camps is inevitable. The time scale of the process will be calculated in months and not in years. A stable regime could be established only after the collision, depending upon the results.

Fascism in power, like Bonapartism, can only be the government of finance capital. In this social sense, it is indistinguishable not only from Bonapartism but even from parliamentary democracy. Each time, the Stalinists made this discovery all over again, forgetting that social questions resolve themselves in the domain of the political. The strength of finance capital does not reside in its ability to establish a government of any kind and at any time, according to its wish; it does not possess this faculty. Its strength resides in the fact that every non-proletarian government is forced to serve finance capital; or better yet, that finance capital possesses the possibility of substituting for each one of its systems of domination that decays, another system corresponding better to the changed conditions. However, the passage from one system to another signifies the political crisis which, with the concurrence of the activity of the revolutionary proletariat may be transformed into a social danger to the bourgeoisie. The passage of parliamentary democracy to Bonapartism itself was accompanied in France by an effervescence of civil war. The perspective of the passage from Bonapartism to fascism is pregnant with infinitely more formidable disturbances and consequently also revolutionary possibilities.

Up to yesterday, the Stalinists considered that our "main mistake" was to see in fascism the petty bourgeoisie and not finance capital. In this case too they put abstract categories in place of the dialectics of the classes. Fascism is a specific means of mobilizing and organizing the petty bourgeoisie in the social interests of finance capital. During the democratic regime capital inevitably attempted to inoculate the workers with confidence in the reformist and pacifist petty bourgeoisie. The passage to fascism, on the contrary, is inconceivable without the preceding permeation of the petty bourgeoisie with hatred of the proletariat. The domination of one and the same superclass, finance capital, rests in these two systems upon directly opposite relations of oppressed classes.

The political mobilization of the petty bourgeoisie against the proletariat, however, is inconceivable without that social demagoguery which means playing with fire for the big bourgeoisie. The danger to "order" of the unleashed petty-bourgeois reaction, has just been confirmed by the recent events in Germany. That is why, while supporting and actively financing reactionary banditry, in the form of one of its wings, the French bourgeoisie seeks not to push matters to the point of the political victory of fascism, aiming only at the establishment of a "strong" power which, in the last analysis, is to discipline the two extreme camps.

What has been said sufficiently demonstrates how important it is to distinguish the Bonapartist form of power from the fascist form. Yet it would be unpardonable to fall into the opposite extreme, that is, to convert Bonapartism and fascism into two logically incompatible categories. Just as Bonapartism begins by combining the parliamentary regime with fascism, so triumphant fascism finds itself forced not only to enter into a bloc with the Bonapartists, but what is more, to draw closer internally to the Bonapartist system. The prolonged domination of finance capital by means of reactionary social demagoguery and petty-bourgeois terror is impossible. Having arrived in power, the fascist chiefs are forced to muzzle the masses who follow them by means of the state apparatus. By the same token, they lose the support of broad masses of the petty bourgeoisie. A small part of it is assimilated by the bureaucratic apparatus. Another sinks into indifference. A third, under various banners, passes into opposition. But while losing its social mass base, by resting upon the bureaucratic apparatus and oscillating between the classes, fascism is regenerated into Bonapartism. Here, too, the gradual evolution is cut into by violent and sanguinary episodes. Differing from pre-fascist or preventive Bonapartism (Giolitti, Bruening-Schleicher, Doumergue, etc.) which reflects the extremely unstable and short-lived equilibrium between the belligerent camps, Bonapartism of fascist origin (Mussolini, Hitler, etc.), which grew out of

the destruction, the disillusionment and the demoralization of the two camps of the masses, distinguishes itself by its much greater stability.

The question "fascism or Bonapartism?" has engendered certain differences on the subject of the Pilsudski regime among our Polish comrades. The very possibility of such differences testifies best to the fact that we are dealing not with inflexible logical categories but with living social formations which represent extremely pronounced peculiarities in different countries and at different stages.

Pilsudski came to power at the end of an insurrection based upon a mass movement of the petty bourgeoisie and aimed directly at the domination of the traditional bourgeois parties in the name of the "strong state"; this is a fascist trait characteristic of the movement and of the regime. But the specific political weight, that is, the mass of Polish fascism was much weaker than that of Italian fascism in its time and still more than that of German fascism; to a much greater degree, Pilsudski had to make use of the methods of military conspiracy and to put the question of the workers' organizations in a much more circumspect manner. It suffices to recall that Pilsudski's coup d'etat took place with the sympathy and the support of the Polish party of the Stalinists. The growing hostility of the Ukrainian and Jewish petty bourgeoisie towards the Pilsudski regime made it, in turn, more difficult for him to launch a general attack upon the working class.

As a result of such a situation, the oscillation between the classes and the national parts of the classes occupied and still occupies with Pilsudski a much greater place, and mass terror a much smaller place, than in the corresponding periods with Mussolini or Hitler; there is the Bonapartist element in the Pilsudski regime. Nevertheless, it would be patently false to compare Pilsudski to Giolitti or to Schleicher and to look forward to his being relieved by a new Polish Mussolini or Hitler. It is methodologically false to form an image of some "ideal" fascism and to oppose it to this real fascist regime which has grown up, with all its peculiarities and contradictions, upon the terrain of the relationship of classes and nationalities in the Polish state. Will Pilsudski be able to lead the action of destruction of the proletarian organizations to the very end? - and the logic of the situation drives him inevitably on this path - that does not depend upon the formal definition of "fascism as such," but upon the true relationship of forces, the dynamics of the political processes taking place in the masses, the strategy of the proletarian vanguard, finally, the course of events in Western Europe and above all in France.

History may successfully inscribe the fact that Polish fascism was overthrown and reduced to dust before it succeeded in finding for itself a "totalitarian" form of expression.

We said above that Bonapartism of fascist origin is incomparably more stable than the preventive Bonapartist experience.



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Leon Trotsky

GERMAN BONAPARTISM

by
Leon Trotsky
Written in exile in Turkey, October 30 1932
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The elections to the Reichstag put the "presidential government to a new critical test. [1] It is useful, therefore, to remind ourselves of its social and political nature. It is precisely through the analysis of such concrete and, at first glance, "sudden" political phenomena as the government of Papen-Schleicher, that the Marxist method reveals its invaluable advantages.

At one time we defined the "presidential" government as a species of Bonapartism. It would be incorrect to see in this definition the chance outcome of a desire to find a familiar name for an unfamiliar phenomenon. The decline of capitalist society places Bonapartism -- side by side with fascism and coupled with it -- again on the order of the day. Previously we have characterized the government of Bruening as a Bonapartist one. Then, in retrospect, we narrowed the definition to a half, or pre-Bonapartist one.

What did other Communists and in general "left" groups say in this connection? To await an attempt at a scientific definition of a new political phenomenon from the present leadership of the Comintern would of course be naive, not to say foolish. The Stalinists simply place Papen in the fascist camp. If Wels and Hitler are "twins," then such a trifle as Papen is altogether not worth breaking one's head about. This is the same political literature that Marx called vulgarian and which he taught us to despise. In reality fascism represents one of the two main camps of civil war. Stretching his arm to power, Hitler first of all demanded the relinquishing of the street to him for seventy-two hours. Hindenburg refused this. The task of Papen-Schleicher: to avoid civil war by amicably disciplining the National Socialists and chaining the proletariat to police fetters. The very possibility of such a regime is determined by the relative weakness of the proletariat

The SAP rids itself of the question of the Papen government as well as of other questions by means of general phrases. The Brandlerites preserved silence on our definition as long as the matter concerned Bruening, that is, the incubation period of Bonapartism. When, however, the Marxist characterization of Bonapartism confirmed itself fully in the theory and practice of the presidential government the Brandlerites came out with their criticism: the wise owl of Thalheimer takes flight in the late hours of the night.

The Stuttgart Arbeitertribüne teaches us that Bonapartism, raising the military-police apparatus over the bourgeoisie in order to defend its class domination against its own political parties, must be supported by the peasantry and must use methods of Social Democracy. Papen is not supported by the peasantry and does not introduce a pseudoradical program. Therefore, our attempt to define the government of Papen as Bonapartism "does not fit at all." This is severe but superficial.

How do the Brandlerites themselves define the government of Papen? In the same issue of the Arbeitertribüne there are very timely announcements of the lecture of Brandler on the subject:

"Junker-monarchical, fascist or proletarian dictatorship?" In this triad the regime of Papen is presented as a Junker-monarchist dictatorship. This is most worthy of the Vorwaerts and of vulgar democrats in general. That titled German Bonapartists make some sort of little private presents to the Junkers is obvious. That these gentlemen are inclined to a monarchistic turn of mind is also known. But it is purest liberal nonsense that the essence of the presidential regime is Junker monarchism.

Such terms as liberalism, Bonapartism, fascism have the character of generalizations. Historical phenomena never repeat themselves completely. It would not have been difficult to prove that even the government of Napoleon III, compared with the regime of Napoleon I, was not "Bonapartist" -- not only because Napoleon himself was a doubtful Bonaparte by blood, but also because his relations to the classes, especially to the peasantry and to the lumpenproletariat were not at all the same as those of Napoleon I. Moreover, classical Bonapartism grew out of the epoch of gigantic war victories, which the Second Empire [2] did not know at all. But if we should look for the repetition of all the traits of Bonapartism, we will find that Bonapartism is a one-time, unique occurrence, i.e., that Bonapartism in general does not exist but that there once was a general named Bonaparte born in Corsica. The case is no different with liberalism and with all other generalized terms of history. When one speaks by analogy of Bonapartism, it is necessary to state precisely which of its traits found their fullest expression under present historical conditions.

Present-day German Bonapartism has a very complex and, so to speak, combined character. The government of Papen would have been impossible without fascism. But fascism is not in power. And the government of Papen is not fascism. On the other hand, the government of Papen, at any rate in its present form, would have been impossible without Hindenburg who, in spite of the final prostration of Germany in the war, stands for the great victories of Germany and symbolizes the army in the memory of the popular masses. The second election of Hindenburg had all the characteristics of a plebiscite. Many millions of workers, petty bourgeois, and peasants (Social Democracy and Center) voted for Hindenburg. They did not see in him any one political program. They wanted first of all to avoid civil war, and raised Hindenburg on their shoulders as a superarbiter, as an arbitration judge of the nation. But precisely this is the most important function of Bonapartism: raising itself over the two struggling camps in order to preserve property and order. It suppresses civil war, or precedes it or does not allow it to rekindle. Speaking of Papen, we cannot forget Hindenburg, on whom rests the sanction of the Social Democracy. The combined character of German Bonapartism expressed itself in the fact that the demagogic work of catching the masses for Hindenburg was performed by two big, independent parties: the Social Democracy and National Socialism. If they are both astonished at the results of their work, that does not change the matter one whit.

The Social Democracy asserts that fascism is the product of Communism. This is correct insofar as there would have been no necessity at all for fascism without the sharpening of the class struggle, without the revolutionary proletariat without the crisis of capitalist society. The Runkeyish theory of Wels-Hilferding-Otto Bauer has no other meaning. Yes, fascism is a reaction of bourgeois society to the threat of proletarian revolution. But precisely because this threat is not an imminent one today, the ruling classes make an attempt to get along without a civil war through the medium of a Bonapartist dictatorship.

Objecting to our characterization of the government of Hindenburg-Papen-Schleicher, the Brandlerites refer to Marx and express thereby an ironic hope that his authority may also have weight with us. It is difficult to deceive oneself more pathetically. The fact is that Marx and Engels wrote not only of the

Bonapartism of the two Bonapartes, but also of other species. Beginning, it seems, with the year 1864, they more than once likened the "national" regime of Bismarck to French Bonapartism. And this in spite of the fact that Bismarck was not a pseudoradical demagogue and, so far as we know, was not supported by the peasantry. The Iron Chancellor was not raised to power as the result of a plebiscite, but was duly appointed by his legitimate and hereditary king. And nevertheless Marx and Engels are right. Bismarck made use in a Bonapartist fashion of the antagonism between the propertied classes and the rising proletariat overcoming in this way the antagonism within the two propertied classes, between the Junkerdom and the bourgeoisie, and raised a military-police apparatus over the nation. The policy of Bismarck is that very tradition to which the "theoreticians" of present German Bonapartism refer. True, Bismarck solved in his fashion the problem of German unity, of the external greatness of Germany. Papen however so far only promises to obtain for Germany "equality" on the international arena. Not a small difference! But we were not trying to prove that the Bonapartism of Papen is of the same caliber as the Bonapartism of Bismarck. Napoleon III was also only a parody of his pretended uncle.

The reference to Marx, as we have seen, has an obviously imprudent character. That Thalheimer does not understand the dialectics of Marxism we suspected long ago. But we must admit we thought that at least he knew the texts of Marx and Engels. We take this opportunity to correct our mistake.

Our characterization of the presidential government rejected by the Brandlerites, received a very brilliant confirmation from a completely unexpected and in its way highly "authoritative source. With regard to the dissolution of the "five-day" Reichstag, DAZ (Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, organ of heavy industry) quoted in a long article on August 28 the work of Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte -- for what purpose? No more and no less than to support the historical and political right of the president to put his boot on the neck of popular representation. The organ of heavy industry risked at a difficult moment drinking from the poisoned wells of Marxism. With a remarkable adroitness the paper takes from the immortal pamphlet a long quotation explaining how and why the French president as the incarnation of the "nation" obtained a preponderance over the split-up parliament. The same article in the DAZ reminds us most opportunely of how in the spring of 1890 Bismarck developed a plan for a most suitable governmental change. Napoleon III and Bismarck as forerunners of presidential government are called by their right name by the Berlin newspaper, which -- in August at least -- played the role of an official organ.

To quote The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte in reference to the "July 20 of Papen" is of course very risky, since Marx characterized the regime of Napoleon in the most acid terms as the regime of adventurers, crooks, and pimps. As a matter of fact, the DAZ could be liable to punishment for a malicious slander of the government. But if we should leave aside this incidental inconvenience, there remains nevertheless the indubitable fact that historic instinct brought the DAZ to the proper place. Unfortunately one cannot say the same of the theoretical wisdom of Thalheimer.

The Bonapartism of the era of the decline of capitalism differs utterly from the Bonapartism of the era of the ascension of bourgeois society. German Bonapartism is not supported directly by the petty bourgeoisie of the country and village, and this is not accidental. Precisely therefore, we wrote at one time of the weakness of the government of Papen, which holds on only by the neutralization of two camps: the proletariat and the fascists.

But behind Papen stand the great landowners, finance capitalists, generals -- so rejoin other "Marxists." Do not the propertied classes in themselves represent a great force? This argument proves once more that

it is much easier to understand class relations in their general sociological outline than in a concrete historical form. Yes, immediately behind Papen stand the propertied heights and they only: precisely therein is contained the cause of his weakness.

Under the conditions of present-day capitalism, a government which would not be the agency of finance capital is in general impossible. But of all possible agencies, the government of Papen is the least stable one. If the ruling classes could rule directly, they would have no need either of parliamentarism, or of Social Democracy, or of fascism. The government of Papen exposes finance capital too clearly, leaving it without even the sacred figleaf ordered by the Prussian Commissioner Bracht Just because the extraparty "national" government is in fact able to speak only in the name of the social heights, capital is ever more careful not to identify itself with the government of Papen. The DAZ wants to find support for the presidential government in the National Socialist masses, and in the language of ultimatums demands of Papen a bloc with Hitler, which means capitulation to him.

In evaluating the "strength" of the presidential government we must not forget the fact that if finance capital stands behind Papen, this does not at all mean that it falls together with him. Finance capital has innumerable more possibilities than Hindenburg-Papen-Schleicher. In case of the sharpening of contradictions there remains the reserve of pure fascism. In case of the softening of contradictions, they will maneuver until the time when the proletariat puts its knee on their chests. For how long Papen will maneuver, the near future will show.

These lines will appear in the press when the new elections to the Reichstag shall already have gone by. The Bonapartist nature of the "anti-French" government of Papen will inevitably reveal itself with a new force, but also its weakness. We will take this up again in due time.

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Leon Trotsky

BEFORE THE DECISION

by
Leon Trotsky
Written in exile in Turkey, February 5 1933
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Frank Manning and George Saunders, for Pathfinder in 1971

THE COUNTERREVOLUTIONARY CAMP

The shifts in government since Bruening's time show how vapid and hollow is the universal philosophy of fascism (cut and dried fascism, national fascism, social fascism, left social fascism) which the Stalinists slap over everything and everybody, excepting themselves only. The upper crust of the possessors is much too small in numbers and much too hated by the people to be able to rule in its own name. They require a screen: traditional monarchic ("Will of God"); liberal-parliamentarian ("Sovereignty of the People"); Bonapartist ("The Impartial Arbiter"); or, finally, fascist ("The Anger of the People"). War and revolution have taken the monarchy from them. Thanks to the reformists, they have maintained themselves on the crutches of democracy for fourteen years. When, under the pressure of class contradictions, the parliament split asunder, they attempt to hide behind the president's back. So opens the chapter of Bonapartism, i.e., the bureaucratic-police government which is raised over society and which maintains itself on the relative equilibrium between the two opposing camps.

Passing through the transitional governments of Bruening and Papen, Bonapartism assumed its purest form in the person of General Schleicher -- but only in order to disclose in him its insolvency. Hostile, doubtful, or alarmed, all classes fixed their eyes upon this enigmatic political figure who resembled nothing so much as a question mark with the epaulettes of a general. But the chief cause for Schleicher's failure, and incidentally for his preceding success as well, lay not within himself. Bonapartism cannot attain stability so long as the camp of revolution and the camp of counterrevolution have not measured their forces in battle. Concurrently the frightful industrial and agrarian crisis that hangs over the country like a nightmare does not facilitate Bonapartist tightrope-balancing. True, at first sight the passivity of the proletariat facilitated in the highest degree the tasks of the "social general."

But it turned out otherwise; precisely this passivity weakened the hoop of fear that binds together the possessing classes, bringing out into the open the antagonisms that tear them apart.

Economically, German rural economy leads a parasitic existence, and it is a heavy hall and chain on the feet of industry. But the narrow social basis of the industrial bourgeoisie turns into a political necessity the preservation of "national" agriculture, namely, the class of Junkers and rich farmers along with all the strata that are dependent on them. Bismarck laid the foundation, firmly binding the agrarians and the industrialists together by military victories, gold indemnities, high profits, and the fear of the proletariat. But Bismarck's times have passed into eternity. Present-day Germany speeds not from victories but from defeat. France pays her no indemnity, but she pays France. Decaying capitalism yields no profits, opens up no perspectives. Nothing cements together the possessing classes except their fear of the workers. However, the German proletariat -- for which its leadership is entirely to blame -- remained paralyzed in

the most critical period, and the antagonisms among the possessing classes broke out into the open. With the left camp expectantly passive, the "social general" fell under the blows from the right.

When this happened, the upper crust of the possessing class took its governmental balance: on the debit side -- a split in their own ranks; among the assets -- an octogenarian field marshal. What more remained? Nothing, except for Hugenberg. Whereas Schleicher personified the unadulterated idea of Bonapartism, Hugenberg personifies in himself the chemically pure idea of property. The general was coy, refusing to reply to the question of which is better, capitalism or socialism; Hugenberg makes no bones about announcing that there is nothing better than an East Prussian Junker on the throne. The most rooted, the most ponderous, and the most entrenched form of property is private ownership of land. If economically German agriculture is maintained by industry, then it is most proper that no other than Hugenberg himself should be at the head of the political struggle of the possessors against the people.

Thus the regime of the supreme arbiter, raised above all classes and parties, has led straight to the supremacy of the German Nationalist Party, the most self-seeking and greedy clique of proprietors. Hugenberg's government stands for the quintessence of social parasitism. But just because of this, when it became necessary, in its pure state it became impossible. Hugenberg requires a screen. As yet today, he cannot hide behind the mantle of a Kaiser, and he is forced to resort to the brown shirt of the Nazi. If one cannot obtain through the monarchy the sanction of the highest heavenly powers for the property owners, there remains the sanction of the reactionary and unbridled rabble.

The investiture of Hitler with power served a twofold purpose: first, to decorate the camarilla of property owners with the leaders of "a national movement"; and secondly, to place the fighting forces of fascism at the direct disposal of the proprietors.

It was not with a light heart that the high and mighty clique made a deal with the malodorous fascists. There are too many, all too many fists behind the unbridled upstarts; and therein lies the dangerous side of the brown-shirted allies; but in that very same thing is also their fundamental, more exactly, their only advantage. And this is the advantage that decides, for such are the times now that there is no guaranteeing property except with fists. There is no way of dispensing with the Nazis. But it is likewise impossible to give over to them the actual power; today, the threat on the part of the proletariat is not so acute that the higher-ups can consciously provoke a civil war with problematic outcome. It is to this new stage in the development of the social crisis in Germany that the new governmental combination corresponds, in which the military and economic posts remain in the hands of the masters, while the plebeians are assigned decorative or secondary posts. The unofficial but all the more real function of the fascist ministers is to bind the revolution with terror. However, the suppression and annihilation of the proletarian vanguard the fascists must achieve not otherwise than within the limits set by the representatives of the agrarians and the industrialists. Such is the plan. But how will its execution turn out?

The government of Hugenberg-Hitler includes within itself a complex system of contradictions: between the traditional representatives of the agrarians on the one side and the licensed representatives of large capital on the other; between both of these on the one side, and the oracles of the reactionary petty bourgeoisie on the other. The combination is extremely unstable. In its present form it will not long endure. What will come in its place in the event of its collapse? In view of the fact that the chief instruments of power are not in Hitler's hands, and since he has amply demonstrated that alongside of the hatred of the proletariat there is deeply ingrained in his bones awe of the possessing classes and their

institutions, it is impossible to exclude absolutely the possibility that the higher-ups, in case of a break with the Nazis, will attempt once again to take to the road of presidential Bonapartism. However, the probability of such a variation, which moreover could have only an episodic character, is extremely slight. It is infinitely more probable that the crisis will continue to develop in the direction of fascism. Hitler as Chancellor is such a direct and open challenge addressed to the proletariat that a mass reaction, even, in the worst instance, a series of disparate reactions, is absolutely inevitable. And this will suffice to push the fascists into the foremost places, displacing their much too corpulent mentors. But on one condition: if the fascists themselves remain on their feet.

The assumption of power by Hitler is indubitably a fearful blow for the working class. But this is still not a decisive or an irrevocable defeat. The enemy, who might have been crushed while he was only striving upwards, has occupied today an entire series of commanding posts. This allows his side a great advantage, but there has been no battle as yet. The occupation of advantageous positions decides nothing by itself -- it is the living forces that decide.

The Reichswehr and the police, the Stahlhelm, and the storm troops of the Nazis constitute three independent armies in the service of the possessing classes. But from the very meaning of the present governmental combination these armies are not united within a single hand. The Reichswehr, to say nothing of the Stahlhelm, is not in Hitler's hands. His own armed forces represent a problematic quantity which is still to be verified. His millions of reserves are human rubbish. In order to conquer complete power, Hitler must provoke a semblance of civil war (he himself is afraid of an out-and-out civil war). His substantial colleagues in the ministry, at whose disposal are the Reichswehr and the Stahlhelm, would prefer to strangle the proletariat by "peaceful" measures. They are much less inclined to provoke a minor civil war for fear of a big one. In this manner there remains no short distance from the ministry headed by the fascist Chancellor to the complete victory of fascism. This means that there is still time at the disposal of the revolutionary camp. How much? It cannot be computed beforehand. Battles alone can measure its duration.

THE PROLETARIAN CAMP

When the official Communist Party states that the Social Democracy is the most important prop of bourgeois domination, it does no more than repeat that idea which served as the point of departure for the organization of the Third International. When the bourgeoisie invites it to power, the Social Democracy casts its vote for the capitalist regime. The Social Democracy tolerates (suffers) any bourgeois government that tolerates the Social Democracy. But even when completely evicted from power, the Social Democracy continues to support bourgeois society, recommending to the workers that they conserve their forces for battles to which it is prepared never to issue a call. By paralyzing the revolutionary energy of the proletariat the Social Democracy provides bourgeois society with an opportunity to remain alive under conditions when it is no longer capable of living, thus turning fascism into a political necessity. The very call of Hitler to power emanates from the Hohenzollern field marshal who had been elected by the votes of Social Democratic workers! The sequence of political figures from Weis to Hitler is quite apparent. There can be no two views on this score among Marxists. But what is in question is not how to interpret a political situation but how to transform it in a revolutionary manner.

The guilt of the Stalinist bureaucracy is not in that it is "irreconcilable," but in that it is politically impotent. From the fact that Bolshevism under the leadership of Lenin proved victorious in Russia, the Stalinist bureaucracy deduces that it is the "duty" of the German proletariat to rally around Thaelmann.

Its ultimatum reads: unless the German workers accept beforehand, a priori and without reservations the Communist leadership, they must not so much as dare think of serious battles. The Stalinists express it differently. But an circumlocutions, restrictions, and oratorical tricks change nothing in the fundamental character of bureaucratic ultimatism, which helped the Social Democracy to bring Germany to Hitler.

The history of the German working class from 1914 represents the most tragic page of modern history. What shocking betrayals by its historical party, the Social Democracy! What ineptitude and impotence on the part of its revolutionary wing! But there is no need to go so far back. For the past two or three years of the fascist upsurge, the policy of the Stalinist bureaucracy has been nothing else but a chain of crimes which literally saved reformism, and thereby prepared for the subsequent successes of fascism. At this moment when the enemy has already occupied important commanding posts, the question inevitably arises: Is it not too late to call for a regrouping of forces in order to repel the enemy? But first we must answer here another question, what does "too late" mean in the given instance? Must this be understood to mean that even the boldest about-face on the road of revolutionary policy is no longer capable of radically changing the relationship of forces? Or does it mean there is neither the possibility nor the hope of achieving the necessary turn? These are two different questions.

We have in effect given an answer to the first already, in what was said above. Even under the most favorable conditions for Hitler, he requires long months -- and what critical months! -- in order to establish the hegemony of fascism. If one takes into consideration the acuteness of the economic and political situation, the ominous character of the present danger, the frightful alarm of the workers, their numbers, their exasperation, the presence of experienced fighting elements in their ranks, and the incomparable capacity of the German workers for organization and discipline, then the answer is clear: during those months which are needed by the fascists in order to break down internal and external barriers and to entrench their dictatorship, the proletariat under correct leadership can come to power two and three times over.

Two and a half years ago, the Left Opposition insistently proposed that all the institutions and organizations of the Communist Party from the Central Executive Committee to the smallest provincial unit should immediately turn to the parallel Social Democratic organizations with a concrete proposal for mutual action against the impending suppression of proletarian democracy. Had a struggle against the Nazis been built on this basis, Hitler would not be Chancellor today and the Communist Party would be occupying the leading place within the working class. But there is no return to the past. The consequences of the mistakes that have been perpetrated have succeeded in becoming political facts and compose at present a part of the objective background. The situation must be taken as it is. It need never have been as bad as it is, but it is not hopeless. A political turn -- but a real one, a bold one, an open one, one that is thought out from all sides -- can completely save the situation and open up the road to victory.

Hitler needs time. A revival of trade and industry, should such become a fact would not at all signify the strengthening of fascism against the proletariat. At the smallest sign of an upturn, capital, which has been famished for profits, will feel the acute need for peace in the factories, and this will at once shift the correlation of forces in favor of the workers. For the economic struggle to merge from the first with the political struggle, it is urgent that the Communists be at their posts, i.e., in the factories and within the trade unions. The Social Democratic leaders have announced that they desire an accord with Communist workers. Very well. Let the 300,000 workers who belong to the RGO take the reformists at their word and turn to the ADGB with the proposal to enter immediately into the Free Trade Unions, as a fraction. One such step will bring about a change in the self-esteem of the workers, and therefore in the entire

political situation.

However, is the turn itself possible? That is what the task reduces itself to at the present moment. As a rule, the vulgarizers of Marx, gravitating towards fatalism, observe nothing on the political arena save objective causes. Meanwhile, the more acute the class struggle becomes, the closer it comes to a catastrophe, the more often the key to the entire situation is entrusted to a given party and its leadership. At this moment the question is posed in this manner: If in the past the Stalinist bureaucracy has held to the road of dullwitted ultimatism, despite the pressure of, say, ten political atmospheres, will it be capable of withstanding a pressure ten times greater, of one hundred atmospheres?

But maybe the masses will go into action of themselves, overturning the barriers of the apparatus after the manner in which the transport strike broke out in Berlin in November 1932? There is no ground, of course, for considering the spontaneous movement of the masses as being excluded. In order to become effective, it must on this occasion surpass the Berlin strike a hundred- or two hundredfold in scope. The German proletariat is sufficiently powerful to sweep into such a movement even if hindered from above. But spontaneous movements are precisely so called because they originate without leadership. Our question touches the problem of what the party should do in order to give impetus to the mass movement in order to help it attain full breadth, in order to take up a place at its head and guarantee it victory...

Today's dispatches have brought news of a general strike in Luebeck in answer to the arrest of a Social Democratic official. This fact, if true, does not in the least rehabilitate the Social Democratic bureaucracy. But it irrevocably condemns the Stalinists along with their theories of social fascism. Only the development and sharpening of the antagonism between the National Socialists and the Social Democrats can bring the Communists out of isolation, after all the mistakes that were made, and open the road to revolution. However, one must not hinder but assist this process which arises from the logic of the relations themselves. The road to this lies through the bold policy of a united front.

The March elections, at which the Social Democracy will clutch in order to paralyze the energy of the workers, will in themselves resolve nothing, of course. If no major events occur before the elections, which will transfer the question to another plane, then the Communist Party should automatically receive an increase in votes. It will be incommensurably greater if the Communist Party should this very day take upon itself the initiative for a defensive united front. Yes, today the matter is one of defense! But the Communist Party can ruin itself if, in the wake of the Social Democracy, even though in different terms, it turns its electioneering agitation into a purely parliamentary hullabaloo, into a means of distracting the attention of the masses from their present impotence and from preparations for the defense. The bold policy of the united front is at this moment the only correct basis for the election campaign as well.

Again, are there enough forces in the Communist Party for the turn? Will the Communist workers have enough energy and resolution to help the pressure of one hundred atmospheres beat its way into bureaucratic skulls? No matter how offensive such an acknowledgment may be, that is precisely how the question is posed at present...

The above lines were written when we learned, after the inevitable delay, from the German newspapers, that Moscow at last has given the signal for alarm to the CEC of the German Communist Party: the time has come for an accord with the Social Democracy. No confirmation of this news is at hand but it smacks of the truth: the Stalinist bureaucracy commands a turn only after the events deal the working class (in the USSR, in China, in Britain, in Germany) a blow on the head. When the fascist Chancellor trains his machine guns at the temples of the proletariat bound hand and foot -- then and only then is the presidium

of the Comintern struck with an inspiration: the time has come to untie the ropes.

It goes without saying that the Left Opposition will take its stand with both feet on the ground of this belated acknowledgment and will try to squeeze from it everything possible for the victory of the proletariat. But while so doing, the Left Opposition will not for a moment forget that the turn of the Comintern is a purely empirical zigzag, performed under the effects of panic. The individuals who equated Social Democracy with fascism are capable, in the process of struggle with fascism, of going over into idealization of the Social Democracy. We must vigilantly keep watch to preserve the complete political Independence of Communism; to coordinate the blows organizationally, but not to mix the banners; to maintain absolute loyalty in our relations with our ally but to keep an eye on him, as our enemy of tomorrow.

[In the light of recent events and against the background of the tragic mistakes of the Stalinists, the story of the capitulation of Wels & Co. resembles a clown's interlude in Shakespearean tragedy. These gentlemen declared yesterday that the danger of fascism is liquidated, thanks to the correct policy of the [KPD] party; and that the policy of the united front, permitted in the recent past is henceforth counterrevolutionary. On the day after these avowals, Hitler came to power and Stalin declared that the united-front policy, but lately counterrevolutionary, is henceforth necessary.]

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Should the Stalinist faction really put into effect the turn that is dictated by the whole situation, the Left Opposition, of course, will take its place in the common ranks of battle. But the confidence of the masses in this turn will be all the greater the more democratically it is achieved. Thaelmann's speeches or manifestos of the Central Executive Committee are much too little for the present sweep of events. What is needed is the voice of the party. There must be a congress of the party. There is no other way of restoring the confidence of the party in itself, and of deepening the confidence of the workers in the party! The congress must take place within two or three weeks, not later than the opening of the Reichstag (if the Reichstag is reconvened at all).

The program of action is clear and simple:

Immediate proposal to all Social Democratic organizations from top to bottom of a united defensive front.

Immediate proposal to the ADGB to admit the RGO into the trade unions.

Immediate preparation for an emergency party congress.

What is at stake is the head of the working class, the head of the Communist International and -- let us not forget it -- the head of the Soviet republic!

POSTSCRIPT

What are the possible plans of the Hitler-Hugenberg government in connection with the elections to the Reichstag? It is perfectly obvious that the present government cannot tolerate a Reichstag with the opposition in the majority. In view of this, the campaign and the elections are bound to lead in one way or another to a denouement. The government understands that even its total electoral victory, i.e., if they receive a 51 percent mandate in the parliament, not only will not mean a peaceful solution of the crisis, but on the contrary may be the signal for a decisive move against fascism. This is why the government

cannot but be prepared for decisive action when the election results become known.

The necessary preliminary mobilization of forces for this will not prove less applicable in the event the governing parties wind up in the minority and consequently must finally abandon the ground of Weimar legality. Thus, in both cases, in the event of the parliamentary defeat of the government (less than 50 percent) and in the event of its victory (more than 50 percent), it is equally to be expected that the new elections will be the occasion for a decisive struggle.

A third variant is not excluded: under the cover of preparation for the elections the National Socialists will carry out a coup d'etat without waiting for the elections. Tactically, a step of this kind would be, if you please, a more correct one -- from the Nazis' point of view. But taking into account the petty-bourgeois character of the party, its incapacity for independent initiative, and its dependence on distrustful allies, it is necessary to conclude that Hitler would hardly decide on this step. That such a coup would be planned by Hitler jointly with his allies would hardly be very likely, since the second task of the elections is precisely to modify the extent of participation of his allies in the government.

Nevertheless, it is necessary in agitational work to bring this third possibility to the fore. If feelings were to run too high in the pre-election period, a coup d'etat might be a necessity for the government, even if its practical plans today do not go that far.

In any case, it is perfectly clear that in its tactical estimates the proletariat must proceed in terms of very little time. Obviously, neither a governing majority in the Reichstag, the dismissal of the new Reichstag for an indefinite period, nor a fascist coup before the elections will signify the final solution of the question to the advantage of fascism. But each of these three variants would signify a new, very important stage in the struggle of revolution and counterrevolution.

The task of the Left Opposition during the election campaign is to give the workers an analysis of the three possible variants within the overall perspective of an inevitable struggle between the proletariat and fascism, not for a lifetime, but to the death. Putting the question this way gives agitation for the policy of a united front the necessary concreteness.

The Communist Party has cried incessantly: 'The proletariat is increasingly on the offensive.' To this the SAP replies: "No, the proletariat is on the defensive; we are only calling it to the offensive." Both formulas demonstrate that these people do not know what is meant by the offensive and the defensive, i.e., offense and defense. The unhappy fact of the matter is that the proletariat is not on the defensive, but in a retreat which tomorrow may be turned into a panicky rout.

We summon the proletariat not to the offensive but to an active defense. Precisely the defensive character of the operations (defense of proletarian organizations, newspapers, meetings, etc.) constitutes the starting point for a united front in relation to Social Democracy. To leap over the formula of active defense means to deal in loud but empty phrases. Obviously, in the event of success, active defense would turn into offense. But this would be a later stage; the road to that lies through the united front in the name of defense.

To expose more clearly the historical significance of the Communist Party's actions and decisions in these days and weeks, it is necessary, in my opinion, to pose the issue before the Communists without the least mitigation; on the contrary, with all sharpness and implacability: the party's renunciation of the united front and of the creation of local defense committees, i.e., future soviets, signifies the capitulation of the party before fascism, an historic crime which is tantamount to the liquidation of the party and the

Communist International. In the event of such a disaster, the proletariat through mounds of corpses, through years of unbearable sufferings and calamities, will come to the Fourth International.

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Leon Trotsky

THE UNITED FRONT FOR DEFENSE: A LETTER TO A SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC WORKER

by

Leon Trotsky

Written in exile in Turkey, February 23 1933

Translated for The Militant, April 1 and 15 1933

This pamphlet addresses itself to the Social Democratic workers, even though personally the author belongs to another party. The disagreements between Communism and Social Democracy run very deep. I consider them irreconcilable. Nevertheless, the course of events frequently puts tasks before the working class which imperatively demand the joint action of the two parties. Is such an action possible? Perfectly possible, as historical experience and theory attest: everything depends upon the conditions and the character of the said tasks. Now, it is much easier to engage in a joint action when the question before the proletariat is not one of taking the offensive for the attainment of new objectives, but of defending the positions already gained.

That is how the question is posed in Germany. The German proletariat is in a situation where it is retreating and giving up its positions. To be sure, there is no lack of windbags to cry that we are allegedly in the presence of a revolutionary offensive. These are people who obviously do not know how to distinguish their right from their left. There is no doubt that the hour of the offensive will strike. But today the problem is to arrest the disorderly retreat and to proceed to the regrouping of the forces for the defensive. In politics as in the military art to understand a problem clearly is to facilitate its solution. To get intoxicated by phrases is to help the adversary. One must see clearly what is happening: the class enemy, that is, monopoly capital and large feudal property, spared by the November Revolution, is attacking along the whole front. The enemy is utilizing two means with a different historical origin: first, the military and police apparatus prepared by all the preceding governments which stood on the ground of the Weimar Constitution; second, National Socialism, that is, the troops of the petty-bourgeois counterrevolution that finance capital arms and incites against the workers.

The aim of capital and of the landowning caste is clear: to crush the organizations of the proletariat, to strip them of the possibility not only of taking the offensive but also of defending themselves. As can be seen, twenty years of collaboration of the Social Democracy with the bourgeoisie have not softened by one iota the hearts of the capitalists. These individuals acknowledge but one law: the struggle for profit. And they conduct this struggle with a fierce and implacable determination, stopping at nothing and still less at their own laws.

The class of exploiters would have preferred to disarm and atomize the proletariat with the least possible expense, without civil war, with the aid of the military and police of the Weimar Republic. But it is afraid, and with good reason, that "legal" means by themselves would prove to be insufficient to drive the workers back into a position where they will no longer have any rights. For this, it requires fascism as a supplementary force. But Hitler's party, fattened by monopoly capital, wants to become not a supplementary force, but the sole governing force in Germany. This situation occasions incessant conflicts between the governmental allies, conflicts which at times take on an acute character. The saviors can afford the luxury of engaging mutually in intrigues only because the proletariat is abandoning

its positions without battle and is beating the retreat without plan, without system, and without direction. The enemy is unleashed to such a point that it does not constrain itself from discussing right in public where and how to strike the next blow: by frontal attack; by bearing down on the Communist left flank; by penetrating deeply at the rear of the trade unions and cutting off communications, etc.... The exploiters whom it has saved discourse on the Weimar Republic as if it were some worn-out bowl; they ask themselves if it should still be utilized for a while or be thrown into the discard right away.

The bourgeoisie enjoys full freedom of maneuver, that is, the choice of means, of time, and of place. Its chiefs combine the arms of the law with the arms of banditry. The proletariat combines nothing at all and does not defend itself. Its troops are split up, and its chiefs discourse languidly on whether or not it is at all possible to combine forces. Therein lies the essence of the interminable discussions on the united front. If the vanguard workers do not become conscious of the situation and do not intervene peremptorily in the debate, the German proletariat may find itself crucified for years on the cross of fascism.

IS IT NOT TOO LATE?

It may be that here my Social Democratic interlocutor interrupts me and says, "Don't you come too late to propagate the united front? What did you do before this?"

This objection would not be correct. This is not the first time that the question of a united front of defense against fascism is raised. I permit myself to refer to what I had the occasion to say on this subject in September 1930, after the first great success of the National Socialists. Addressing myself to the Communist workers, I wrote:

"The Communist Party must call for the defense of those material and moral positions which the working class has managed to win in the German state. This most directly concerns the fate of the workers' political organizations, trade unions, newspapers, printing plants, clubs, libraries, etc. Communist workers must say to their Social Democratic counterparts: 'The policies of our parties are irreconcilably opposed; but if the fascists come tonight to wreck your organization's hall, we will come running, arms in hand, to help you. Will you promise us that if our organization is threatened you will rush to our aid?' This is the quintessence of our policy in the present period. All agitation must be pitched in this key.

"The more persistently, seriously, and thoughtfully... we carry on this agitation, the more we propose serious measures for defense in every factory, in every working-class neighborhood and district the less the danger that a fascist attack will take us by surprise, and the greater the certainty that such an attack will cement rather than break apart the ranks of the workers."

The pamphlet from which I take this extract was written two and a half years ago. There is not the slightest doubt today that if this policy had been adopted in time, Hitler would not be Chancellor at the present time and the positions of the German proletariat would be unassailable. But one cannot return to the past. As a result of the mistakes which were committed and the time which was allowed to pass, the problem of defense is posed today with infinitely greater difficulty: but the task remains just as before. Even right now it is possible to alter the relation of forces in favor of the proletariat. Towards this end, one must have a plan, a system, a combination of forces for the defense. But above all, one must have the will to defend himself. I hasten to add that he alone defends himself well who does not confine himself to the defensive but who, at the first occasion, is determined to pass over to the offensive.

What attitude does the Social Democracy adopt towards this question?

A NONAGGRESSION PACT

The Social Democratic leaders propose to the Communist Party to conclude a "nonaggression pact." When I read this phrase for the first time in the Vorwaerts, I thought it was an incidental and not very happy pleasantry. The formula of the nonaggression pact, however, is today in vogue and at the present time it is at the center of all the discussions. The Social Democratic leaders are not lacking in tried-out and skillful policies. All the more reason for asking how they could have chosen such a slogan, which runs counter to their own interests.

The formula has been borrowed from diplomacy. The meaning of this type of pact is this: two states which have sufficient causes for war engage themselves for a determined period not to resort to the force of arms against each other. The Soviet Union, for example, has signed such a rigorously circumscribed pact with Poland. Assuming that a war were to break out between Germany and Poland, the said pact would in no way obligate the Soviet Union to come to the aid of Poland. Nonaggression and nothing more. In no way does it imply common action for defense; on the contrary, it excludes this action: without this, the pact would have a quite different character and would be called by a quite different name.

What sense then do the Social Democratic leaders give to this formula? Do the Communists threaten to sack the Social Democratic organizations? Or else is the Social Democracy disposed to undertake a crusade against the Communists? As a matter of fact something entirely different is in question. If one wants to use the language of diplomacy, it would be in place to speak not of a nonaggression pact, but of a defensive alliance against a third party, that is, against fascism. The aim is not to halt or to exorcise an armed struggle between Communists and Social Democrats -- there could be no question of a danger of war -- but of combining the forces of the Social Democrats and the Communists against the attack with arms in hand that has already been launched against them by the National Socialists.

Incredible as it may seem, the Social Democratic leaders are substituting for the question of genuine defense against the armed actions of fascism, the question of the political controversy between Communists and Social Democrats. It is exactly as if one were to substitute for the question of how to prevent the derailment of a train, the question of the need for mutual courtesy between the travelers of the second and third classes.

The misfortune, in any case, is that the ill-conceived formula of a "nonaggression pact" will not even be able to serve the inferior aim in whose name it is dragged in by the hair. The engagement assumed by two states not to attack each other in no way eliminates their struggle, their polemics, their intrigues, and their maneuvers. The semiofficial Polish journals, in spite of the pact, foam at the mouth when they speak of the Soviet Union. For its part, the Soviet press is far from making compliments to the Polish regime. The fact of the matter is that the Social Democratic leaders have steered a wrong course in trying to substitute a conventional diplomatic formula for the political tasks of the proletariat.

**ORGANIZE THE DEFENSE JOINTLY;
DO NOT FORGET THE PAST;
PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE**

More prudent Social Democratic journalists translate their thought in this sense: they are not opponents of a "criticism based upon facts," but they are against suspicions, insults, and calumnies. A very laudable attitude! But how is the limit to be found between permitted criticism and inadmissible campaigns? And

where are the impartial judges? As a general rule, the criticism never pleases the criticized, above all when he can raise no objection to the essence of it.

The question of whether or not the criticism of the Communists is good or bad is a question apart. If the Communists and the Social Democrats had the same opinion on this subject, there wouldn't be two parties in the world, independent from each other. Let us concede that the polemic of the Communists is not worth much. Does that fact lessen the mortal danger of fascism or do away with the need for joint resistance?

However, let us look at the other side of the picture: the polemic of the Social Democracy itself against Communism. The Vorwaerts (I am simply taking the first copy at hand) publishes the speech which Stampfer [1] delivered on the subject of the nonaggression pact. In this same issue a cartoon has as its caption: The Bolsheviks are signing a nonaggression pact with Pilsudski but they refuse to draw up a similar pact with the Social Democracy. Now, a cartoon is also a polemical "aggression," and it so happens that this particular one is most unfortunate. The Vorwaerts completely forgets the fact that a nonaggression treaty existed between the Soviets and Germany during the period when the Social Democrat Mueller was at the head of the Reich government.

The Vorwaerts of February 15, on the same page, defends in the first column the idea of a nonaggression pact, and in the fourth column makes the accusation against the Communists that their factory committee at the Aschinger Company betrayed the interests of the workers during negotiations for the new wage scale. They openly use the word "betrayed." The secret behind this polemic (is it a criticism based on facts or a campaign of slander?) is very simple: new elections to the factory committee of the Aschinger Company were to take place at this time. Can we, in the interests of the united front asks the Vorwaerts, put an end to attacks of this sort? In order for that to happen, the Vorwaerts would have to stop being itself, that is, a Social Democratic journal. If the Vorwaerts believes what it prints on the subject of the Communists, its first duty is to open the eyes of the workers to the faults, crimes, and "betrayals" of the latter. How could it be otherwise? The need for a fighting agreement flows from the existence of two parties, but it does not do away with the fact. Political life goes on. Each party, even though it adopts the frankest attitude on the question of the united front cannot help thinking of its own future.

ADVERSARIES CLOSE RANKS IN THE FACE OF THE COMMON DANGER

Let us assume for the moment that a Communist member of the Aschinger Company factory committee declares to the Social Democratic member: "Because the Vorwaerts characterized my attitude on the question of the wage scale as an act of treason, I do not want to defend, together with you, my head and your neck from the fascist bullets." No matter how indulgently we wanted to view this action, we could only characterize the reply as utterly insane.

The intelligent Communist the serious Bolshevik, will say to the Social Democrat: "You are aware of my enmity to the views expressed by the Vorwaerts. I am devoting and shall devote all my energy to undermining the dangerous influence which this paper has among the workers. But I am doing that and shall do it by my speeches, by criticism and persuasion. But the fascists want to do away arbitrarily with the existence of the Vorwaerts. I promise you that jointly with you I will defend your paper to the utmost of my ability, but I am waiting for you to say that at the first appeal you will likewise come to the defense of Die Rote Fahne regardless of your attitude towards its views." Is this not an irreproachable way of posing the question? Does not this method correspond with the fundamental interests of the whole

of the proletariat?

The Bolshevik does not ask the Social Democrat to alter the opinion he has of Bolshevism and of the Bolshevik press. Moreover, he does not demand that the Social Democrat make a pledge for the duration of the agreement to keep silent on his opinion of Communism. Such a demand would be absolutely inexcusable. "So long," says the Communist "as I have not convinced you and you have not convinced me, we shall criticize each other with full freedom, each using the arguments and expressions he deems necessary. But when the fascist wants to force a gag down our throats, we will repulse him together!" Can an intelligent Social Democratic worker counter this proposal with a refusal?

The polemic between Communist and Social Democratic newspapers, no matter how bitter it may be, cannot prevent the compositors of the papers from forming a fighting agreement to organize a joint defense of their presses from attacks of the fascist bands. The Social Democratic and Communist deputies in the Reichstag and the Landtags, the municipal counselors, etc., are compelled to come to the physical defense of each other when the Nazis resort to loaded canes and chairs. Are more examples needed?

What is true in each particular case is also true as a general rule: the inevitable struggle in which Social Democracy and Communism are engaged for the leadership of the working class cannot and must not prevent them from closing their ranks when blows threaten the whole working class. Isn't this obvious?

TWO WEIGHTS AND TWO SCALES

The Vorwaerts is indignant because the Communists accuse the Social Democrats (Ebert, Scheidemann, Noske, Hermann Mueller, Grzesinsky) of paving the road for Hitler. The Vorwaerts has a legitimate right to indignation. But this remark is too much: how can we, it cries out, make a united front with such slanderers? What have we here: sentimentalism? Prudish sensitiveness? No, that really smacks of hypocrisy. As a matter of fact, the leaders of the German Social Democracy cannot have forgotten that Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Babel [2] often asserted that the Social Democracy was ready, for the sake of definite objectives, to come to an agreement with the devil and his grandmother. The founders of the Social Democracy certainly did not demand that during this occasion the devil should check his horns in the museum and that his grandmother should become converted to Lutheranism. Whence then comes this prudish sensitiveness among the Social Democratic politicians who, since 1914, have made united fronts with the Kaiser, Ludendorff, Groener, Bruening, Hindenburg? Whence come these two weights and two scales: one for the bourgeois parties, the other for the Communists?

The leaders of the Center consider that every infidel who denies the dogmas of the Catholic Church, the only Savior, is one of the damned and shortly destined for eternal torments. That did not prevent Hilferding, who has no particular reason for believing in the immaculate conception, from establishing a united front with the Catholics in the government and in parliament. Together with the Center the Social Democrats set up the "Iron Front" However, not for a single instant did the Catholics cease their unbearable propaganda and their polemics in the churches. Why these demands on Hilferding's part with regard to the Communists? Either a complete cessation of mutual criticism, that is, of the struggle of tendencies within the working class, or a rejection of all joint action. "All or nothing!" The Social Democracy has never put such ultimatums to bourgeois society. Every Social Democratic worker should reflect upon these two weights and two measures.

Suppose at a meeting, even today, someone should ask Weis how it happens that the Social Democracy,

which gave the republic its first Chancellor and its first president, has led the country to Hitler. Wels will surely reply that to a large extent it is the fault of Bolshevism. Surely the day hasn't passed that the Vorwaerts has failed to repeat this explanation ad nauseam. Do you think that in the united front with the Communists it will forego its right and its duty to tell the workers what it considers to be truth? The Communists certainly have no need of that. The united front against fascism is only one chapter in the book of the struggle of the proletariat. The chapters that went before cannot be effaced. The past cannot be forgotten. We must build on it We preserve the memory of Ebert's alliance with Groener and of Noske's role. We remember under what conditions Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht died. We Bolsheviks have taught the workers to forget nothing. We do not ask the devil to cut off his tail: that would hurt him and we would not profit by it We accept the devil just as nature has created him. We have no need of the repentance of the Social Democratic leaders nor of their loyalty to Marxism; but we do need the will of the Social Democracy to struggle against the enemy which actually threatens it with death. For our part, we are ready to carry out in the joint struggle all the promises which we have made. We promise to fight courageously and to carry the fight to a finish. That is quite enough for a fighting agreement.

YOUR LEADERS DON'T WANT TO FIGHT!

However, it still remains to be known why the Social Democratic leaders speak at all regarding polemics, nonaggression pacts, and the disgusting manners of the Communists, instead of answering this simple question: In what way shall we fight the fascists? For the simple reason that the Social Democratic leaders do not want to fight. They cherished the hope that Hindenburg would save them from Hitler. Now they are waiting for some other miracle. They do not want to fight. They lost the habit of fighting long ago. The struggle frightens them.

Stampfer wrote regarding the actions of the fascist banditry at Eisleben: [3] "Faith in right and justice has not yet died in Germany" (Vorwaerts, February 14).

It is impossible to read these words without being revolted. Instead of a call for a fighting united front, we get the consoling words: "Faith in justice has not died." Now, the bourgeoisie has its justice, and the proletariat its own, too. Armed injustice always comes out on top of disarmed justice. The whole history of humanity proves this. Whoever makes an appeal to this obvious phantom of justice is deceiving the workers. Whoever wants the victory of proletarian justice over fascist violence, must agitate for the struggle and set up the organs of the proletarian united front.

In the entire Social Democratic press it is impossible to find a single line indicating genuine preparation for the struggle. There is not a single thing, merely some general phrases, postponements to some indefinite future, nebulous consolations. "Only let the Nazis start something, and then..." And the Nazis started something. They march forward step by step, they tranquilly take over one position after another. These petty-bourgeois reactionary malefactors do not care for risks. Now, they do not need to risk anything at all: they are sure in advance that the enemy will retreat without a fight. And they are not mistaken in their calculations.

Of course, it often occurs that a combatant must retreat in order to get a good start for a leap forward. But the Social Democratic leaders are not inclined to make the leap forward. They do not want to leap. And all their dissertations are made in order to conceal this fact Just a short time ago they kept asserting that so long as the Nazis do not quit the ground of legality, there is no room for a fight. Now we get a good look at what this legality was: a series of promissory notes on the coup d'etat Still, this coup d'etat is

possible only because the Social Democratic leaders lull the workers to sleep with phrases about the legality of the coup d'etat and console them with hope of a new Reichstag yet more impotent than those that preceded it. The fascists can ask for nothing better.

Today the Social Democracy has even ceased speaking of struggles in the indefinite future. On the subject of the destruction of the working-class organizations and press, already begun, the Vorwaerts "reminds" the government not to forget that "in a developed capitalist country the conditions of production group the workers in factories." These words indicate that the leadership of the Social Democracy accepts in advance the destruction of the political, economic, and cultural organizations created by three generations of the proletariat "In spite of this" the workers will remain grouped by the industries themselves. Well then, what good are proletarian organizations if the question can be solved so simply?

The leaders of the Social Democracy and the trade unions wash their hands, and relegate themselves to the sidelines while waiting. If the workers themselves, "grouped together by industries," break the bonds of discipline and begin the struggle, the leaders, obviously, will intervene as they did in 1918, in the role of pacifiers and mediators, and will force themselves onto the workers' backs to reestablish the positions they have lost.

The leaders conceal from the eyes of the masses their refusal to fight and their dread of the struggle by means of hollow phrases about nonaggression pacts. Social Democratic workers, your leaders do not want to fight!

THEN IS OUR PROPOSAL A MANEUVER?

Here the Social Democrat will again interrupt us to say. "Since you do not believe in our leaders" desire to fight against fascism, isn't your proposal for a united front an obvious maneuver?" Even more, he will repeat the reflections printed in the Vorwaerts to the effect that the workers need unity and not "maneuvers."

This type of argument has quite a convincing sound. In actuality it is an empty phrase. Yes, we Communists are positive that the Social Democratic and trade-union functionaries will continue to evade the struggle to the best of their ability. At the critical moment a large segment of the working-class bureaucracy will pass directly over to the fascists. The other segment, which succeeds in exporting its carefully hoarded financial resources to some other country, will emigrate at the opportune moment. All these actions have already begun, and their further development is inevitable. But we do not confuse this segment today the most influential in the reformist bureaucracy, with the Social Democratic Party or the entirety of the trade unions. The proletarian nucleus of the party will fight with sure blows, and it will carry behind it a good-sized section of the apparatus. Exactly where will the line of demarcation pass between the turncoats, traitors, and deserters, on one side, and those who want to fight, on the other? We can only find this out through experience. That is why, without possessing the slightest confidence in the Social Democratic bureaucracy, the Communists cannot abstain from addressing themselves to the whole party. Only in this manner will it be possible to separate those who want to fight from those who want to desert. If we are mistaken in our estimation of Weis, Breitscheid, Hilferding, Crispian, [4] and the rest, let them prove that we are liars by their actions. We will declare a mea culpa on the public squares. If all this is merely a "maneuver" on our part, it is a correct and necessary maneuver which serves the interests of the cause.

You Social Democrats remain in your party because you have faith in its program, in its tactics, and in its leadership. This is a fact with which we reckon. You regard our criticism as false. That is your privilege. You are by no means obliged to believe the Communists on faith, and no serious Communist will demand this of you. But on their side the Communists have the right to put no confidence in the functionaries of the Social Democracy and not to consider the Social Democrats as Marxists, revolutionists, and genuine socialists. Otherwise, the Communists would have had no need to create a separate party and International. We must take the facts as they are. We must build the united front not in the clouds, but on the foundation which all the previous development has laid down. If you sincerely believe that your leadership will lead the workers to struggle against fascism, what Communist maneuver can you distrust? Then what is this maneuver of which the Vorwaerts is continually speaking? Think R out carefully. Is this not a maneuver on the part of your leaders who want to frighten you with the hollow word "maneuver" and thus keep you away from the united front?

THE TASKS AND METHODS OF THE UNITED FRONT

The united front must have its organs. There is no need to imagine what these may be: the situation itself is dictating the nature of these organs. In many localities, the workers have already suggested the form of organization of the united front, as a species of defense cartels basing themselves on all the local proletarian organizations and establishments. This is an initiative which must be grasped, deepened, consolidated, extended to cover the industrial centers with cartels, by linking them up with each other and by preparing a German workers' congress of defense.

The fact that the unemployed and the employed workers are becoming increasingly estranged from each other bears within itself a deadly danger not only for the collective-bargaining agreements, but also for the trade unions, without even any need for a fascist crusade. The united front between Social Democrats and Communists means first of all a united front of the employed and unemployed workers. Without that, any serious struggle in Germany is quite unthinkable.

The RGO must enter into the Free Trade Unions as a Communist fraction. That is one of the principal conditions for the success of the united front. The Communists within the trade unions must enjoy the rights of workers' democracy and, in the first place, full freedom of criticism. On their part they must respect the statutes of the trade unions and their discipline.

Defense against fascism is not an isolated thing. Fascism is only a cudgel in the hands of finance capital. The aim of the crushing of proletarian democracy is to raise the rate of exploitation of labor power. There lies an immense field for the united front of the proletariat: the struggle for daily bread, extended and sharpened, leads directly under present conditions to the struggle for workers' control of production.

The factories, the mines, the large estates fulfill their social functions thanks only to the labor of the workers. Can it be that the latter have not the right to know whither the owner is directing the establishment why he is reducing production and driving out the workers, how he is fixing prices, etc.? We will be answered: "Commercial secrets." What are commercial secrets? A plot of the capitalists against the workers and the people as a whole. Producers and consumers, the workers in this twofold capacity must conquer the right to control all the operations of their establishments, unmasking fraud and deceit in order to defend their interests and the interests of the people as a whole, facts and figures in hand. The struggle for workers' control of production can and should become the slogan of the united front.

With regard to organization, the forms necessary for cooperation between Social Democratic workers and Communist workers will be found without difficulty: it is only necessary to pass over from words to deeds.

THE IRRECONCILABLE CHARACTER OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND THE COMMUNIST PARTIES

Now, if a common defense against the attack of capital is possible, can we not go still farther and form a genuine bloc of the two parties on all the questions? Then the polemic between the two would take on an internal, pacific, and cordial character. Certain left Social Democrats, of the type of Seydewitz, as is known, even go so far as to dream of a complete union of the Social Democracy and the Communist Party. But all this is a vain dream! What separates the Communists from the Social Democracy are antagonisms on fundamental questions. The simplest way of translating the essence of their disagreements is this: the Social Democracy considers itself the democratic doctor of capitalism,- we are its revolutionary gravediggers.

The irreconcilable character of the two parties appears with particular clearness in the light of the recent evolution of Germany. Leipart laments that in calling Hitler to power the bourgeois classes have disrupted the "integration of the workers into the State and he warns the bourgeoisie against the "dangers" flowing from it (Vorwaerts, February 15, 1933). Leipart thus makes himself the watchdog of the bourgeois state by desiring to preserve it from the proletarian revolution. Can we even dream of union with Leipart?

The Vorwaerts prides itself every day on the fact that hundreds of thousands of Social Democrats died during the war "for the ideal of a finer and freer Germany"... It only forgets to explain why this finer Germany turned out to be the Germany of Hitler- Hugenberg. In reality, the German workers, like the workers of the other belligerent countries, died as cannon fodder, as slaves of capital. To idealize this fact is to continue the treason of August 4, 1914.

The Vorwaerts continues to appeal to Marx, to Engels, to Wilhelm Liebknecht, to Bebel, who from 1848 to 1871 spoke of the struggle for the unity of the German nation. Lying appeals! At that time, it was a question of completing the bourgeois revolution. Every proletarian revolutionist had to fight against the particularism and provincialism inherited from feudalism. Every proletarian revolutionist had to fight against this particularism and provincialism in the name of the creation of a national state. At the present time, such an objective is invested with a progressive character only in China, in Indochina, in India, in Indonesia, and other backward colonial and semicolonial countries. For the advanced countries of Europe, the national frontiers are exactly the same reactionary chains as were the feudal frontiers at one time.

"The nation and democracy are twins," the Vorwaerts says again. Quite true! But these twins have become aged, infirm, and have fallen into senility. The nation as an economic whole, and democracy as a form of the domination of the bourgeoisie, have been transformed into fetters upon the productive forces and civilization. Let us recall Goethe once again: "All that is born is doomed to perish."

A few more millions may be sacrificed for the "corridor," for Alsace-Lorraine, for Malmedy. 5 These disputed bits of land may be covered with three, five, ten tiers of corpses. AU this may be called national defense. But humanity will not progress because of it; on the contrary, it will fail on all fours backward into barbarism. The way out is not in the "national liberations of Germany, but in the liberation of Europe

from national barriers. It is a problem which the bourgeoisie cannot resolve, any more than the feudal lords in their time were able to put an end to particularism. Hence the coalition with the bourgeoisie is doubly reprehensible. A proletarian revolution is necessary. A federation of the proletarian republics of Europe and the whole world is necessary.

Social patriotism is the program of the doctors of capitalism; internationalism is the program of the gravediggers of bourgeois society. This antagonism is irreducible.

DEMOCRACY AND DICTATORSHIP

The Social Democrats consider the democratic Constitution to be above the class struggle. For us, the class struggle is above the democratic Constitution. Can it be that the experience undergone by postwar Germany has passed without leaving a trace, just as the experiences undergone during the war? The November Revolution brought the Social Democracy to power. The Social Democracy spurred the powerful movement of the masses along the road of "right" and the "Constitution." The whole political life which followed in Germany evolved on the bases and within the framework of the Weimar Republic.

The results are at hand: bourgeois democracy transforms itself legally, pacifically, into a fascist dictatorship. The secret is simple enough: bourgeois democracy and fascist dictatorship are the instruments of one and the same class, the exploiters. It is absolutely impossible to prevent the replacement of one instrument by the other by appealing to the Constitution, the Supreme Court at Leipzig, new elections, etc. What is necessary is to mobilize the revolutionary forces of the proletariat. Constitutional fetishism brings the best aid to fascism. Today this is no longer a prognostication, a theoretical affirmation, but the living reality. I ask you, Social Democratic worker: if the Weimar democracy blazed the trail for the fascist dictatorship, how can one expect it to blaze the trail for socialism?

"But can't we Social Democratic workers win the majority in the democratic Reichstag?"

That you cannot. Capitalism has ceased to develop; it is putrefying. The number of industrial workers is no longer growing. An important section of the proletariat is being degraded in continual unemployment. By themselves, these social facts exclude the possibility of any stable and methodical development of a labor party in parliament as before the war. But even if, against all probability, the labor representation in parliament should grow rapidly, would the bourgeoisie wait for a peaceful expropriation? The governmental machinery is entirely in its hands! Even admitting that the bourgeoisie allows the moment to pass and permits the proletariat to gain a parliamentary representation of 51 percent, wouldn't the Reichswehr, the police, the Stahlhelm, and the fascist storm troops disperse this parliament in the same way that the camarilla today disperses with a stroke of the pen all the parliaments which displease it?

"Then, down with the Reichstag and elections?"

No, that's not what I mean. We are Marxists and not anarchists. We are supporters of the utilization of parliament: it is not an instrument for transforming society, but a means of rallying the workers. Nevertheless, in the development of the class struggle, a moment arrives when it is necessary to decide the question of who is to be master of the country: finance capital or the proletariat. Dissertations on the nation and on democracy in general constitute, under such conditions, the most impudent lying. Under our eyes, a small German minority is organizing and arming, as it were, half of the nation to crush and strangle the other half. It is not a question today of secondary reforms, but of the life or death of bourgeois society. Never have such questions been decided by a vote. Whoever appeals today to the

parliament or to the Supreme Court at Leipzig, is deceiving the workers and in practice is helping fascism.

THERE IS NO OTHER ROAD

"What is to be done under such conditions?" my Social Democratic interlocutor will ask.

The proletarian revolution.

"And then?"

The dictatorship of the proletariat.

"As in Russia? The privations and the sacrifices? The complete stifling of freedom of opinion? No, not for me."

It is precisely because you are not disposed to tread the road of the revolution and the dictatorship that we cannot form one single party together. But nevertheless allow me to tell you that your objection is not worthy of a conscious proletarian. Yes, the privations of the Russian workers are considerable. But in the first place, the Russian workers know in the name of what they are making these sacrifices. Even if they should undergo a defeat humanity would have learned a great deal from their experience. But in the name of what did the German working class sacrifice itself in the years of the imperialist war? Or again, in the years of unemployment? To what do these sacrifices lead, what do they yield, what do they teach? Only those sacrifices are worthy of man which blaze the trail to a better future. That's the first objection I heard you make; the first, but not the only one.

The sufferings of the Russian workers are considerable because in Russia, as a consequence of specific historical factors, was born the first proletarian state, which is obliged to raise itself from extreme poverty by its own strength. Do not forget that Russia was the most backward country of Europe. The proletariat there constituted only a tiny part of the population. In that country, the dictatorship of the proletariat necessarily had to assume the harshest forms. Thence the consequences which flowed from it: the development of the bureaucracy which holds power, and the chain of errors committed by the political leadership which has fallen under the influence of this bureaucracy. If at the end of 1918, when power was completely in its hands, the Social Democracy had entered boldly upon the road to socialism and had concluded an indissoluble alliance with Soviet Russia, the whole history of Europe would have taken another direction and humanity would have arrived at socialism in a much shorter space of time and with infinitely less sacrifice. It is not our fault that this did not happen.

Yes, the dictatorship in the Soviet Union at the present time has an extremely bureaucratic and distorted character. I have personally criticized more than once in the press the present Soviet regime which is a distortion of the workers' state. Thousands upon thousands of my comrades fill the prisons and the places of exile for having fought against the Stalinist bureaucracy. However, even when judging the negative sides of the present Soviet regime, it is necessary to preserve a correct historical perspective. If the German proletariat much more numerous and more civilized than the Russian proletariat, were to take the power tomorrow, this would not only open up immense economic and cultural perspectives but would also lead immediately to a radical attenuation of the dictatorship in the Soviet Union.

It must not be thought that the dictatorship of the proletariat is necessarily connected with the methods of Red terror which we had to apply in Russia. We were the pioneers. Covered with crime, the Russian

possessing classes did not believe that the new regime would last. The bourgeoisie of Europe and America supported the Russian counterrevolution. Under these conditions, one could hold on only at the cost of terrific exertion and the implacable punishment of our class enemies. The victory of the proletariat in Germany would have quite a different character. The German bourgeoisie, having lost the power, would no longer have any hope of retaking it. The alliance of Soviet Germany with Soviet Russia would multiply, not twofold but tenfold, the strength of the two countries. In all the rest of Europe, the position of the bourgeoisie is so compromised that it is not very likely that it would be able to get its armies to march against proletarian Germany. To be sure, the civil war would be inevitable: there are enough fascists for that. But the German proletariat, armed with state power and having the Soviet Union behind it, would soon bring about the atomization of fascism by drawing to its side substantial sections of the petty bourgeoisie. The dictatorship of the proletariat in Germany would have incomparably more mild and more civilized forms than the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia.

"In that case, why the dictatorship?"

To annihilate exploitation and parasitism; to crush the resistance of the exploiters; to end their inclination to think about a reestablishment of exploitation; to put all the power, all the means of production, all the resources of civilization into the hands of the proletariat; and to permit it to utilize all these forces and means in the interest of the socialist transformation of society: there is no other road.

THE GERMAN PROLETARIAT WILL HAVE THE REVOLUTION IN GERMAN AND NOT IN RUSSIAN

"Still, it often happens that our Communists approach us Social Democrats with this threat: just wait, as soon as we will get into power, we'll put you up against the wall."

Only a handful of imbeciles, windbags, and braggarts, who are a safe bet to decamp at the moment of danger, can make such threats. A serious revolutionist, while acknowledging the inescapability of revolutionary violence and its creative function, understands at the same time that the application of violence in the socialist transformation of society has well-defined limits. The Communists cannot prepare themselves save by seeking mutual understanding and a rapprochement with the Social Democratic workers. The revolutionary unanimity of the overwhelming majority of the German proletariat will reduce to a minimum the repression which the revolutionary dictatorship will exercise. It is not a question of slavishly copying Soviet Russia, of making a virtue of each of its necessities. That is unworthy of Marxists. To profit by the experience of the October Revolution does not mean that it should be copied blindly. One must take into account differences among nations, in the social structure and above all in the relative importance and the cultural level of the proletariat. To assume that one can make the socialist revolution in a presumably constitutional, peaceful manner, with the acquiescence of the Supreme Court at Leipzig -- that can be done only by incurable philistines. The German proletariat will be unable to walk around the revolution. But in its revolution, it will speak in German and not in Russian. I am convinced that it will speak much better than we did.

WHAT SHALL WE DEFEND?

"Very good, but we Social Democrats propose nevertheless to come to power by democracy. You Communists consider that an absurd utopia. In that case, is the united front of defense possible? For it is necessary to have a clear idea of what there is to defend. If we defend one thing and you another, we will

not end up with common actions. Do you Communists consent to defend the Weimar Constitution?"

The question is a fitting one and I will try to answer it candidly. The Weimar Constitution represents a whole system of institutions, of rights and of laws. Let us commence from the top. The republic has at its head a president. Do we Communists consent to defend Hindenburg against fascism? I think that the need for that doesn't make itself felt, Hindenburg having called the fascists to power. Then comes the government presided over by Hitler. This government does not need to be defended against fascism. In the third place comes the parliament. When these lines appear, the sort of parliament emerging from the elections of March 5 will probably have been determined. But even at this juncture one can say with certainty that if the composition of the Reichstag proves to be hostile to the government; if Hitler takes it into his head to liquidate the Reichstag and if the Social Democracy shows a determination to fight for the latter, the Communists will help the Social Democracy with all their strength.

We Communists cannot and do not want to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat against you or without you, Social Democratic workers. We want to come to this dictatorship together with you. And we regard the common defense against fascism as the first step in this sense. Obviously, in our eyes, the Reichstag is not a capital historical conquest which the proletariat must defend against the fascist vandals. There are more valuable things. Within the framework of bourgeois democracy and parallel to the incessant struggle against it, the elements of proletarian democracy have formed themselves in the course of many decades: political parties, labor press, trade unions, factory committees, clubs, cooperatives, sports societies, etc. The mission of fascism is not so much to complete the destruction of bourgeois democracy as to crush the first outlines of proletarian democracy. As for our mission, it consists in placing those elements of proletarian democracy, already created, at the foundation of the soviet system of the workers' state. To this end, it is necessary to break the husk of bourgeois democracy and free from it the kernel of workers' democracy. Therein lies the essence of the proletarian revolution. Fascism threatens the vital kernel of workers' democracy. This itself clearly dictates the program of the united front. We are ready to defend your printing plants and our own, but also the democratic principle of freedom of the press; your meeting halls and ours, but also the democratic principle of the freedom of assembly and association. We are materialists and that is why we do not separate the soul from the body. So long as we do not yet have the strength to establish the soviet system, we place ourselves on the terrain of bourgeois democracy. But at the same time we do not entertain any illusions.

AS TO FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

"And what will you do with the Social Democratic press if you should succeed in seizing power? Will you prohibit our papers as the Russian Bolsheviks prohibited the Menshevik papers?"

You put the question badly. What do you mean by "our" papers? In Russia the dictatorship of the proletariat proved possible only after the overwhelming majority of the worker-Mensheviks passed over to the side of the Bolsheviks, whereas the petty-bourgeois debris of Menshevism undertook to help the bourgeoisie fight for the restoration of "democracy," that is, of capitalism. However, even in Russia we did not at all inscribe upon our banner the prohibition of the Menshevik papers. We were led to do this by the incredibly harsh conditions of the struggle that had to be conducted to save and maintain the revolutionary dictatorship. In Soviet Germany, the situation will be, as I have already said, infinitely more favorable; and the regime of the press will necessarily feel the effects of it. I do not think that in this field the German proletariat needs to resort to repression.

To be sure, I do not want to say that the workers' state will tolerate even for a day the regime of

"(bourgeois) freedom of the press," that is, the state of affairs in which only those who control the printing plants, the paper companies, the bookstores, and so on, that is, the capitalists, can publish papers and books. Bourgeois "freedom of the press" signifies a monopoly for finance capital to impose capitalist prejudices upon the people by means of hundreds and thousands of papers charged with disseminating the virus of lies in the most perfect technical form. Proletarian freedom of the press will mean the nationalization of the printing plants, the paper companies, and the bookstores in the interest of the workers. We do not separate the soul from the body. Freedom of the press without linotypes, without printing presses, and without paper is a miserable fiction. In the proletarian state the technical means of printing will be put at the disposal of groups of citizens in accordance with their real numerical importance. How is this to be done? The Social Democracy will obtain printing facilities corresponding to the number of its supporters. I do not think that at that time this number will be very high: otherwise the very regime of the dictatorship of the proletariat would be impossible. Nevertheless, let us leave it to the future to settle this question. But the principle itself, of distributing the technical means of printing, not according to the thickness of the checkbook, but according to the number of supporters of a given program, of a given current, of a given school, is, I hope, the most honest, the most democratic, the most authentically proletarian principle. Isn't that so?

"Maybe."

Then shall we shake hands on it? "I'd like to think it over a bit."

I ask for nothing else, my dear friend: the aim of all my reflections is to have you meditate once more upon all the great problems of proletarian policy.

*transcribed by director@marx.org
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Leon Trotsky

THE TRAGEDY OF THE GERMAN PROLETARIAT: THE GERMAN WORKERS WILL RISE AGAIN -- STALINISM, NEVER!

by

Leon Trotsky

Written in exile in Turkey, March 14 1933

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The most powerful proletariat of Europe, measured by its place in production, its social weight, and the strength of its organizations, has manifested no resistance since Hitler's coming to power and his first violent attacks against the workers' organizations. This is the fact from which to proceed in subsequent strategic calculations.

It would be patently stupid to believe that the future evolution of Germany will follow the Italian road; that Hitler will strengthen his domination step by step without serious resistance; that German fascism will enjoy long years of domination. No, the further fate of National Socialism will have to be deduced from an analysis of the German and international conditions, and not from purely historical analogies. But this much is already evident: if from September 1930 onwards we demanded of the Communist International a short-range policy in Germany, then it is necessary now to work out a long-range policy. Before decisive battles will become possible, the proletarian vanguard will have to reorient itself; that is to say, it will have to understand what has happened, assign the responsibility for the great historical defeat, trace out the new road, and thus regain confidence in itself

The criminal role of the Social Democracy requires no commentary: the Comintern was created fourteen years ago precisely in order to snatch the proletariat from the demoralizing influence of the Social Democracy. If it has not succeeded up to now, if the German proletariat found itself impotent disarmed, and paralyzed at the moment of its greatest historic test the direct and immediate blame falls upon the leadership of the post-Leninist Comintern. That is the first conclusion which ought to be drawn immediately.

Under the treacherous blows of the Stalinist bureaucracy, the Left Opposition maintained its fidelity to the official party to the very end. The Bolshevik-Leninists now share the fate of all the other Communist organizations: the militants of our cadres are arrested, our publications forbidden, our literature confiscated. Hitler even hurried to suspend the Bulletin of the Opposition appearing in the Russian language. But if, together with the whole proletarian vanguard, the Bolshevik-Leninists bear the consequences of the first serious victory of fascism, they cannot and will not bear even a shadow of the responsibility for the official policy of the Comintern.

Since 1923, that is, since the beginning of the struggle against the Left Opposition, the Stalinist leadership, although indirectly, assisted the Social Democracy with all its strength to derail, to befuddle, to enfeeble the German proletariat: it restrained and hindered the workers when the conditions dictated a courageous revolutionary offensive; it proclaimed the approach of the revolutionary situation when it had already passed; it worked up agreements with petty-bourgeois phrasemongers and windbags; it limped

impotently at the tail of the Social Democracy under cover of the policy of the united front; it proclaimed the "third period" and the struggle for the conquest of the streets under conditions of political ebb and the weakness of the Communist Party; it replaced the serious struggle by leaps, adventures or parades; it isolated the Communists from the mass trade unions; it identified the Social Democracy with fascism and rejected the united front with the mass workers' organizations in face of the aggressive bands of the National Socialists; it sabotaged the slightest initiative for the united front for local defense, at the same time it systematically deceived the workers as to the real relationship of forces, distorted the facts, passed off friends as enemies and enemies as friends -- and drew the noose tighter and tighter around the neck of the party, not permitting it to breathe freely any longer, nor to speak, nor to think.

Out of the vast literature devoted to the question of fascism it is enough to refer to the speech of Thaelmann, official leader of the German Communist Party, who, at the plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International in April 1931, denounced the "pessimists," that is, those who knew how to foresee, in the following terms: "We have not allowed the moods of panic to rout us.... We have soberly and firmly established the fact that September 14 [1930] was in a certain sense Hitler's best day, and that afterwards will come not better days but worse. This evaluation which we made of the development of this party is confirmed by the events.... Today, the fascists have no reasons for laughing." Referring to the creation of defense groups by the Social Democracy, Thaelmann demonstrated in the same speech that these groups differ in no respect from the shock troops of the National Socialists and that both of them are likewise preparing to annihilate Communism.

Today, Thaelmann is under arrest. Faced with triumphant reaction, the Bolshevik-Leninists are in the same ranks as Thaelmann. But the policy of Thaelmann is the policy of Stalin, that is, the official policy of the Comintern. It is precisely this policy which is the cause of the complete demoralization of the party at the moment of danger, when the leaders lose their heads, when the party members, unaccustomed to thinking, fall prostrate, when the principal historic positions are surrendered without a fight. A false political theory bears within itself its own punishment. The strength and the obstinacy of the apparatus only augment the dimensions of the catastrophe.

Having surrendered to the enemy everything that could be surrendered in such a short space of time, the Stalinists are trying to rectify the past by means of convulsive acts, which only more brightly illuminate the whole chain of crimes committed by them. Now that the press of the Communist Party is stifled, now the apparatus is destroyed, now the bloody pennant of fascism waves with impunity over the Karl Liebknecht House, [1] the Executive Committee of the Comintern is starting out on the road of the united front not only from below but also from above. The new zigzag, sharper than all that preceded it, has not, however, been effected on the impulse of the ECCI itself, the Stalinist bureaucracy has abandoned the initiative to the Second International. The latter has succeeded in taking hold of the weapon of the united front of which it has been in mortal dread until now. To the extent that it is possible to speak of political advantages under the conditions of a panicky retreat, they are to be found exclusively on the side of reformism. Forced to reply to a direct question, the Stalinist bureaucracy chose the worst way: it does not reject an entente of the two Internationals, but neither does it accept it; it plays hide and seek. It has come to such a lack of self-confidence, to such degradation, that it no longer dares to show itself to the world proletariat face to face with the leaders of the Second International, the branded agents of the bourgeoisie, the electors of Hindenburg who blazed the trail of fascism.

In a special appeal of the ECCI on March 5, "To the Workers of AU Countries," the Stalinists do not say a word about social fascism as the main enemy. They no longer speak about the great discovery of their

leader: "The Social Democracy and fascism are not antipodes but twins." They no longer insist on saying that the struggle against fascism demands as a preliminary the defeat of the Social Democracy. They do not breathe a word about the inadmissibility of the united front from above. On the contrary, they carefully enumerate those cases in the past where the Stalinist bureaucracy, unexpectedly for the workers and for itself, found itself forced to improvise proposals for the united front to the reformist summits. Thus do artificial, false, and charlatanesque theories founder in the fury of the historical tempest

"Taking into account the peculiarities of each country" and the impossibility, which allegedly flows from them, of organizing the united front on an international scale (the struggle against "exceptionalism," that is, the theory of the right-wingers on national peculiarities, is suddenly forgotten), the Stalinist bureaucracy recommends to the national Communist parties that they address proposals for a united front to the "Central Committees of the Social Democratic parties." Only yesterday this was proclaimed a capitulation to social fascism! Thus do all the great lessons of Stalinism for the last four years fly under the table into the wastebasket. Thus is a whole political system reduced to dust.

Matters do not rest there: having just declared the impossibility of generating the conditions for a united front on the international arena, the ECCI immediately forgets it and no more than twenty lines further on formulates the conditions under which the united front is admissible and acceptable in all countries, in spite of the difference in national conditions. The retreat before fascism is followed by a panic-stricken retreat from the theoretical commandments of Stalinism. Chips and fragments of ideas and principles are thrown out along the road like so much ballast

The conditions for the united front put forward by the Comintern for all the countries (committees of action against fascism, demonstrations and strikes against wage reductions) present nothing new. On the contrary, they are the schematized and bureaucratized reproduction of the slogans that the Left Opposition formulated much more clearly and concretely two and a half years ago, for which it was registered in the camp of social fascism. The united front on such a basis could have yielded decisive results in Germany; but for that, it would have had to be carried out in time. Time is an important factor in politics.

What is therefore the practical value now of the proposals of the ECCI? For Germany, it is minimal. The policy of the united front assumes a "front," that is, stabilized positions and a centralized leadership. The Left Opposition put forward the conditions for the united front back then as conditions for an active defense, with the perspective of passing over to the offensive. Now, the German proletariat has been reduced to a state of disorderly retreat, without even rearguard battles. In this situation, voluntary unions of Communist and Social Democratic workers can and will be realized for various episodic tasks, but the systematic construction of the united front is inevitably thrust back for the indefinite future. There must be no illusions on this score.

About eighteen months ago, we wrote that the key to the situation is in the hands of the German Communist Party. The Stalinist bureaucracy has now let this key fall from its hands. Great events outside of the will of the party will be necessary to give the workers the possibility of drawing up short, of fortifying themselves, of rebuilding their ranks and of passing over to an active defense. We have no way of knowing with precision when this will occur. Perhaps much quicker than the triumphant counterrevolution hopes. But in any case, it is not those who issued the manifesto of the ECCI who will direct the policy of the united front in Germany.

If the central position has been surrendered, one must fortify the approaches; one must prepare bases for

a future assault from all sides. In Germany, this preparation implies the critical elucidation of the past, maintaining the spirits of the vanguard fighters, rallying them, and organizing rearguard combats wherever possible -- in anticipation of the moment when the various fighting groups will draw together into a great army. This preparation implies at the same time defending the proletarian positions in the countries closely connected with Germany or located near it: in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, the Baltic countries, Scandinavia, Belgium, Holland, France, and Switzerland. Fascist Germany must be surrounded by a powerful circle of proletarian fortifications. Without ceasing for an instant the attempts to halt the disorderly retreat of the German workers, it is necessary to create fortified proletarian positions around the frontiers of Germany for the struggle against fascism.

In the first place comes Austria, which is immediately threatened by the fascist cataclysm. One can say with confidence that if the Austrian proletariat were to seize power now and transform its country into a revolutionary battleground, Austria would become for the revolution of the German proletariat what Piedmont [2] was for the revolution of the Italian bourgeoisie. It cannot be predicted how far the Austrian proletariat pushed forward by the events but paralyzed by the reformist bureaucracy, will advance along this road. The task of Communism is to help the events, overcoming Austro-Marxism. The policy of the united front is one of the means. The conditions which the manifesto of the ECCI takes over so tardily from the Left Opposition thus retain all their force.

However, the policy of the united front contains not only advantages but also dangers. It easily gives birth to combinations between leaders behind the back of the masses, to a passive adaptation to the ally, to opportunist vacillations. It is possible to ward off these dangers only if there exist two express guarantees: the maintenance of full freedom of criticism of the ally and the reestablishment of full freedom of criticism within the ranks of one's own party. To refuse to criticize one's allies leads directly and immediately to capitulation to reformism. The policy of the united front in the absence of party democracy, that is, without control of the apparatus by the party, leaves the leaders a free hand for opportunist experiments, the inevitable complements of adventurist experiments.

How has the ECCI acted in this case? Dozens of times the Left Opposition predicted that under the blows of events, the Stalinists would be forced to repudiate their ultraleftism and that, placing themselves on the road of the united front they would begin to commit all the opportunist treasons which they attributed to us only yesterday. This time, too, the prediction has been realized literally.

In making a dizzying swing towards the position of the united front the ECCI tramples on the fundamental guarantees which alone can assure a revolutionary content to the policy of the united front. The Stalinists take into consideration and accept the hypocritical-diplomatic demands of the reformists for so-called mutual nonaggression. Breaking with all the traditions of Marxism and of Bolshevism, they recommend to the Communist parties, in case a united front is realized, that they "abandon all attacks against the Social Democratic organizations during the joint action." That's just what it says. "To abandon all attacks [!] upon the Social Democracy" (what a shameful formula!) means to abandon the freedom of political criticism, that is, a basic function of the revolutionary party.

The capitulation is called for not by practical necessity but by a panicky state of mind. The reformists come and will come to an agreement to the extent that the pressure of events and the pressure of the masses force them to do so. The demand for "nonaggression" is blackmail, that is, the attempt of the reformist leaders to extort an auxiliary advantage. To submit to blackmail means to build the united front upon rotten foundations and to give the reformist businessmen the possibility of blowing it up under

some arbitrary pretext or other.

Criticism in general, all the more so under the conditions of a united front should of course correspond to the real relations and observe the necessary proportions. The absurdities about "social fascism" must be refuted. That is a concession not to the Social Democracy, but to Marxism. It is not for the treachery of 1918 but for its evil work in 1933 that the ally must be criticized. But criticism, like political life itself, of which criticism is the voice, cannot be halted for an hour. If the Communists' disclosures correspond to reality, they serve the purposes of the united front pushing forward the temporary ally and, what is more important giving a revolutionary education to the whole proletariat To abandon this fundamental duty is the first stage in that shameful and criminal policy which Stalin foisted upon the Chinese Communists with regard to the Kuomintang.

Matters stand no better with regard to the second guarantee. Having renounced criticism of the Social Democracy, the Stalinist apparatus does not even think of giving the right of criticism to the members of its own party. The turn itself is accomplished, as usual, by way of a bureaucratic revelation. Not a single national congress, no international congress, nor even a plenum of the ECCI; no preparation in the press of the party, no analysis of the policy of the past. And there is nothing astounding in this. At the very first steps in the discussion in the party, each thinking worker would ask the functionaries: Why have the Bolshevik- Leninists been expelled from all the sections and why are they subjected in the Soviet Union to arrests, to deportation, and to firing squads? Is it only because they dig deeper and see further? The Stalinist bureaucracy cannot permit such a conclusion. It is capable of any flip-flops or somersaults, but to present itself honestly before the workers face to face with the Bolshevik- Leninists -- that's something it cannot and does not dare to do. Thus in the struggle for self-preservation, the Stalinist apparatus vitiates its new turn by making it suspect beforehand in the view not only of the Social Democratic workers but also of the Communists.

The publication of the manifesto of the ECCI is accompanied by yet another circumstance, extraneous to the question we are examining, but which throws an exceedingly glaring light on the present position of the Comintern and on the attitude of the leading Stalinist groups towards it. In Pravda of March 6, the manifesto is published not as a direct and open appeal of the ECCI situated in Moscow -- as was always the case -- but as the translation of a document from l'Humanite, transmitted from Paris by the telegraphic agency TASS.

What a stupid and humiliating ruse! After all the successes, after the realization of the first Five Year Plan, after the "disappearance of the classes," after the "entry into socialism," the Stalinist bureaucracy no longer dares to publish in its own name the manifesto of the Executive Committee of the Communist International. That is its real relationship to the Comintern and that is how confident it is on the international arena.

The manifesto is not the sole reply to the initiative of the Second International. Through the intermediary of paper organizations -the revolutionary trade union oppositions (RGOS) of Germany and Poland, the Antifascist Alliance, and the so- called Italian General Confederation of Labor, the Comintern is convening for the month of April a "Pan-European workers' Antifascist Congress." The list of those invited, as is proper, is confused and vast: factories (they say "factories," although by the efforts of Stalin-Lozovsky the Communists have been ousted from practically all the factories in the world), local labor organizations, revolutionary, reformist Catholic, belonging to a party or not, sports, antifascist, and peasant organizations. And more: "We wish also to invite all those individuals who are really [!] fighting

for the cause of the workers." Having compromised for a long time the cause of the masses, the strategists appeal to the "individuals," to those hermits who have found no place in the ranks of the masses but who, just the same, "are really fighting for the cause of the workers." Barbusse and General Schoenaich [3] will once more be mobilized to save Europe from Hitler.

Here we have a ready-made libretto for one of those charlatan presentations with which the Stalinists are in the habit of masking their impotence. What has the Amsterdam bloc of centrists and the pacifists accomplished in the struggle against the aggression of the Japanese bandits in China? Nothing. Out of respect for Stalinist "neutrality," the pacifists have not even issued a manifesto of protest. Now a new edition of the Amsterdam Congress is being prepared, not against war but against fascism. What will the antifascist bloc of vacated "factories" and impotent "individuals" do? Nothing. It will issue a hollow manifesto, if, as a matter of fact things go as far this time as the holding of a congress.

The propensity for individuals has two faces: opportunistic and adventurist. The Russian Social Revolutionaries in the old days extended the right hand to the liberals and held a bomb in the left hand. The experience of the last ten years attests that after every great defeat provoked or at least aggravated by the policy of the Comintern, the Stalinist bureaucracy invariably sought to refurbish its reputation with the aid of some grandiose adventure or other (Estonia, Bulgaria, Canton). Doesn't this danger exist now too? In any case, we deem it necessary to raise a voice of warning. Adventures that aim to replace the action of the paralyzed masses disorganize the masses still more and aggravate the catastrophe.

The conditions of the present world situation, as well as the conditions of each country in particular, are just as deadly for the Social Democracy as they are favorable for the revolutionary party. But the Stalinist bureaucracy has succeeded in converting the crisis of capitalism and of reformism into a crisis of Communism. That is the sum total of ten years of uncontrolled command by the epigones.

Hypocrites will be found to say: the Opposition is criticizing a party which has fallen into the hands of the executioner. Blackguards will add: the Opposition is helping the executioner. By combining a specious sentimentalism with venomous falsehood, the Stalinists will endeavor to hide the Central Committee behind the apparatus, the apparatus behind the party, to eliminate the question of responsibility for the catastrophe, for the false strategy, for the disastrous regime, for the criminal leadership: that means helping the executioners of today and tomorrow.

The policy of the Stalinist bureaucracy in China was no less disastrous than it is now in Germany. But there, the affair took place behind the back of the world proletariat, under conditions which were incomprehensible to it. The critical voice of the Opposition hardly reached beyond the Soviet Union to the workers of the other countries. The Stalinist apparatus went practically unpunished for the Chinese experience. In Germany, it is entirely different. All the stages of the drama developed before the world proletariat. At each stage, the Opposition raised its voice. The whole course of development was announced in advance. The Stalinist bureaucracy slandered the Opposition, imputed to it ideas and plans alien to it; expelled all those who dared to speak of the united front; helped the Social Democratic bureaucracy demolish the united local defense committees; cut the workers off from the slightest possibility of setting out on the road of the mass struggle; disorganized the vanguard; paralyzed the proletariat. Thus, by opposing a united front of defense with the Social Democracy, the Stalinists found themselves with the latter in a united front of panic and of capitulation.

And now, already standing just short of ruin, the leadership of the Comintern fears light and criticism more than anything else. Let the world revolution perish, but long live vain prestige! The bankrupts sow

confusion, bury the evidence, and cover their tracks. The fact that the Communist Party of Germany lost "only" 1,200,000 votes at the first blow -- with a general rise in the number of voters of three to four millions -- is proclaimed by Pravda as an "enormous political victory." In the same way, in 1924, Stalin proclaimed as an "enormous victory" the fact that the workers in Germany, who were retreating without battle, had still given the Communist Party 3,600,000 votes. If the proletariat deceived and disarmed by both apparatuses, has this time given the Communist Party almost five million votes, this signifies only that they would have given it twice or three times that number had they trusted its leadership. They would have raised it to power had it shown itself capable of taking and holding power. But it gave the proletariat nothing save confusion, zigzags, defeats, and calamities.

Yes, five million Communists still succeeded in reaching the ballot box, one by one. But in the factories and on the streets, there are none. They are disconcerted, dispersed, demoralized. They have been broken away from independence under the yoke of the apparatus. The bureaucratic terror of Stalinism paralyzed their willpower before the turn came for the terror of the fascist bands.

It must be said clearly, plainly, openly: Stalinism in Germany has had its August 4. Henceforth, the advanced workers will only speak of the period of the domination of the Stalinist bureaucracy with a burning sense of shame, with words of hatred and curses. The official German Communist Party is doomed. From now on it will only decompose, crumble, and melt into the void. German Communism can be reborn only on a new basis and with a new leadership.

The law of uneven development acts also upon the fate of Stalinism. In the various countries, it finds itself in different stages of decomposition. To what degree the tragic experience of Germany will serve as a stimulus to the rebirth of the other sections of the Comintern, the future will show. In Germany in any case the swan song of the Stalinist bureaucracy has been sung. The German proletariat will rise again, Stalinism -- never. Under the terrible blows of the enemy, the advanced German workers will have to build up a new party. The Bolshevik-Leninists will give all their forces to this work.

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Leon Trotsky

GERMANY AND THE USSR

by
Leon Trotsky
Written in exile in Turkey, March 17 1933
Letter signed with a pen-name
Translated for the Internal Bulletin of the
Communist League of America, no. 11, March 31 1933

The complete absence of resistance on the part of the German workers has provoked certain troubles within our own ranks. We expected that the onward march of the fascist danger would surmount not only the perfidious policy of the reformists but also the ultimatum sabotage of the Stalinists. These hopes were not confirmed. Were our expectations false? This question cannot be put in such a formal manner. We were obliged to proceed from a course based upon resistance and to do all in our power for its realization. To acknowledge a priori the impossibility of resistance would have meant not to push the proletariat forward but to introduce a supplementary demoralizing element.

The events have brought their verification. The first lesson is drawn in Trotsky's article "The Tragedy of the German Proletariat" Now one can say almost with certainty that only a change of conjuncture would create an impulse toward a real mass struggle. In the meantime, the task is mainly one of criticism and preparation. The regime of fascist terror will be a serious test for our cadres as a whole and for each member in particular. It is precisely such a period that steels and educates the revolutionists. So long as the fascists tolerate the existence of the trade unions, it is necessary for the Left Opposition at all costs to penetrate them and take up definite conspiratorial work within them. The transition to illegality does not simply mean to go underground (establishment of an organ in a foreign country, smuggling and distribution, illegal nuclei within the country, etc.), but also ability to undertake conspiratorial work within the mass organizations to the extent that these exist

The question of the possible role of the Red Army is posed sharply for many comrades. It is evidently not a question of revision of our principled position. If the internal situation in the USSR had permitted, the Soviet government at the time of Hitler's first approach toward power, should have mobilized some army divisions in White Russia and the Ukraine, naturally under the shield of defending the Soviet borders. Departing from the indisputable idea that the Red Army can only assist and not replace the revolution in

objective of assisting the German proletariat would have been hardly comprehensible. But it is possible to draw the peasants into the kind of war which begins as a defense of the Soviet territory against a menacing danger. (All that was said in Trotsky's History of the Russian Revolution on the subject of defense and offense in regard to revolution relates no less to the question of war.)

The form Red Army action might take in the German events naturally would have to accord completely with the development of those events and with the spirit of the German working masses. But just because the German workers feel themselves unable to break the chains of passivity, the initiative in the struggle, even in the preliminary form mentioned above, would belong to the Red Army. The obstacle to this initiative, however, is not the present situation in Germany, but the situation in the USSR. It appears that many foreign comrades give insufficient attention to this side of the question. It is more than a year since we spoke of the necessity of the intervention of the Red Army in case fascism should come to power. In this we based our thinking on the hope that not only in Germany but also in Russia the necessary political change would be produced which would improve the economic situation, and that thereby the Soviet power would have acquired the necessary freedom of movement. In reality, however, the internal developments during the last year have assumed an extremely unfavorable character. The economic situation as well as the spirit of the masses renders a war difficult in the highest degree. All information from the USSR affirms that under the present conditions the slogan of military assistance to the German proletariat would appear even to the advanced Russian workers as unrealizable, unreal, and fantastic.

We do not yield one iota of our principled position. While the position of active internationalism serves us today above all for the purpose of pursuing an unmerciful criticism of the Stalinist bureaucracy, which in the decisive hour paralyzes the workers' state, yet we can in no case leave the objective situation out of consideration: the consequences of the mistakes have become transformed into objective factors. To demand the mobilization of the Red Army under the present conditions would be sheer adventurism. But so much more resolutely must we then demand a change in the policy of the USSR in the name of consolidation of the proletarian dictatorship and the active role of the Red Army.

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Leon Trotsky

HITLER AND THE RED ARMY

by
Leon Trotsky
Written in exile in Turkey, March 21 1933
Bulletin of the Opposition, no. 34, May 1933
Translated for The Militant, April 8 1933

America has reproduced European capitalism on a grandiose scale, but it has reproduced European socialism only on an insignificant scale. American Social Democracy has never been anything but a caricature of European Social Democracy. This "law of uneven development" has also retained all its force so far as Stalinism is concerned. The CPUSA is weaker than any of the European parties, yet the Stalinist bureaucracy in America carries out all the zigzags and all the mistakes with a fabulous exaggeration.

A year and a half ago, the Stalinists thought that an attack on the USSR by Japan was a matter of days, and on this "prognosis," dictated by the bourgeois press, they tried to base their whole policy. We declared on the contrary that, so long as it had not assimilated Manchuria, the danger of an attack by Japan was absolutely unlikely. The American Stalinists accused us in this connection of being in the service of the Japanese general staff. In general, these gentlemen draw their arguments from sewers and drainpipes.

We declared furthermore that the danger of a fascist victory in Germany -- a danger for the world revolution and above all for the Soviet Union -- was more real and more imminent than the danger of Japanese intervention. The European Stalinists shouted that we were "panic-stricken." The American Stalinists, more impudently, declared that we were consciously aiming to distract the attention of the world proletariat from the imminent danger in the East to the Soviet Union. The events brought their verification. For a year and a half, the "imminent" Japanese aggression has failed to take place. (Obviously this does not mean that the danger of Japanese intervention does not exist in general.) During this time, Hitler has come to power and with a few blows has defeated the principal ally of the USSR, the German Communist Party, weakened in advance by the lies and the falsity of Stalinism.

A year and a half ago, we wrote that the Red Army, in its principal mass, ought to turn its face to the West to acquire the possibility of smashing fascism before it destroys the German proletariat and unites with European and world imperialism. In answer to this, the American Stalinists, the most stupid and impudent of all, declared that we wanted to drag the USSR into a war, interrupt its economic buildup, and assure the victory of imperialism. The old fable says that nothing is so dangerous as an ignorant friend. To appeal for military actions against Japan while there was not and could not be an immediate danger in that direction meant to distract from the real danger of fascism. Obviously, the Stalinists carried out this task not because they desired the victory of Hitler, but out of political blindness. At the same time, we must be just to them: if they had desired the victory of Hitler, they could not have acted otherwise than they did. Now that Hitler is in power, and his whole policy compels him to prepare a coup toward the East (the revelations of the Polish-Ukrainian program of Goering are sufficiently eloquent!), the Stalinists say: whoever makes up his mind to appeal to the Red Army injures socialist construction. But even leaving aside the question of help to the German proletariat, there remains the question of the defense of socialist construction against German fascism, the shock troops of world imperialism. Do the

Stalinists deny this danger? The most they can say is that Hitler is not yet today, capable of carrying on a war. That is true, and we said so some time ago. But if Hitler, today incapable of carrying on a war, will be capable of it tomorrow -- and he will not be able to avoid carrying on war -- does not a correct strategy demand that Hitler be prevented from preparing his blow, that is, that the German workers get rid of Hitler before he gets rid of the German workers? Marxists have often made fun of parliamentary cretinism, but kolkhoz [collective-farm] cretinism is no better. One cannot sow grain and plant cabbages with his back turned to the West, from which, for the first time since 1918, comes the greatest threat, which can be a mortal danger if it is not paralyzed in time.

Or have the Stalinists perhaps assimilated the pacifist wisdom of the "purely defensive war being the only permissible one? Let Hitler attack us first, then we will defend ourselves. This was always the reasoning of the German Social Democracy: let the National Socialists first openly attack the constitution, ah, then... etc. Still, when Hitler openly attacked the constitution, it was already too late to think of its defense.

He who does not outstrip the enemy while he is still weak; who passively lets him strengthen and reinforce himself, protect his rearguard, create an army for himself, receive support from abroad, assure himself of allies; who leaves to the enemy complete freedom of initiative -- such a man is a traitor, even if the motives for his treason are not to render service to imperialism, but consist of petty-bourgeois weakness and political blindness.

The "justification" of a policy of waiting and evasion under these conditions can only be weakness. This is a very serious argument but we have to give a clear account of it to ourselves. We must say: the Stalinist policies in the USSR have so thoroughly disorganized the economy and the relations between proletariat and peasantry, have so badly weakened the party, that the necessary premises for an active foreign policy do not exist today.

We take into consideration the force of this argument We know that the consequences of a false policy become transformed into objective obstacles along the road. We reckon with these obstacles; we don't advocate an adventure. But we draw the conclusion: a fundamental change in the policy, the methods, the leadership of the party is necessary in order to assure the Soviet state, in addition to everything else, a real capacity for defense and freedom of initiative internationally.

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Leon Trotsky

THE GERMAN CATASTROPHE: THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE LEADERSHIP

by

Leon Trotsky

Written in exile in Turkey, May 28 1933

Bulletin of the Opposition, no. 35, July 1933

The New Republic, July 5 1933

Translated by Max Shachtman

The imperialist epoch, in Europe at least, has been one of sharp turns, in which politics has acquired an extremely mobile character. At each turn the stakes have been not some partial reform or other, but the fate of the regime. The exceptional role of the revolutionary party and of its leadership is based on this fact. If, in the good old days when the Social Democracy grew regularly and uninterruptedly, like the capitalism which nourished it, the leadership of Bebel resembled a general staff tranquilly elaborating plans for a war in the indefinite future (a war that perhaps might not come after all), under present conditions the Central Committee of a revolutionary party resembles the field headquarters of an army in action. The strategy of the study has been replaced by the strategy of the battlefield.

The struggle against a centralized enemy demands centralization. Trained in a spirit of strict discipline, the German workers assimilated this idea with renewed vigor during the war and the political convulsions which followed it. The workers are not blind to the defects of their leadership, but none of them as an individual is able to shake off the grip of the organization. The workers as a whole consider it better to have a strong leadership, even if a faulty one, than to pull in different directions or to resort to "freelance" activities. Never before in the history of humanity has a political staff played so important a role or borne such responsibility as in the present epoch.

The unparalleled defeat of the German proletariat is the most important event since the conquest of power by the Russian proletariat. The first task on the morrow of the defeat is to analyze the policy of the leadership. The most responsible leaders (who are, heaven be praised, safe and sound) point with pathos to the imprisoned rank-and-file executors of their policies in order to suppress all criticism. We can only meet such a spuriously sentimental argument with contempt. Our solidarity with those whom Hitler has imprisoned is unassailable, but this solidarity does not extend to accepting the mistakes of the leaders. The losses sustained will be justified only if the ideas of the vanquished are advanced. The preliminary condition for this is courageous criticism.

For a whole month not a single Communist organ, the Moscow Pravda not excepted, uttered a word on the catastrophe of March 5. They all waited to hear what the presidium of the Executive Committee of the Communist International would say. For its part the presidium oscillated between two contradictory variants: "The German Central Committee led us astray," and "The German Central Committee pursued a correct policy." The first variant was ruled out: the preparation of the catastrophe had taken place under the eyes of everybody, and the controversy with the Left Opposition that preceded the catastrophe had too clearly committed the leaders of the Communist International. At last, on April 7, the decision was announced: "The political line... of the Central Committee, with Thaelmann at its head, was completely correct up to and during Hitler's coup d'etat." It is only to be regretted that all those who were dispatched

into the beyond by the fascists did not learn of this consoling affirmation before they died.

The resolution of the presidium does not attempt to analyze the policy of the German Communist Party -- which might have been expected, above all else -- but is another in the long series of indictments against the Social Democracy. It preferred, we are told, a coalition with the bourgeoisie to a coalition with the Communists; it evaded a real struggle against fascism; it fettered the initiative of the masses; and as it had in its hands the "leadership of the mass labor organizations," it succeeded in preventing a general strike. All this is true. But it is nothing new. The Social Democracy, as the party of social reform, exhausted the progressiveness of its mission as capitalism was transforming itself into imperialism. During the war the Social Democracy functioned as a direct instrument of imperialism. After the war it hired itself out officially as the family doctor of capitalism. The Communist Party strove to be its gravedigger. On whose side was the whole course of development? The chaotic state of international relations, the collapse of pacifist illusions, the unparalleled crisis which is tantamount to a great war with its aftermath of epidemics -- all this, it would seem, revealed the decadent character of European capitalism and the hopelessness of reformism.

Then what happened to the Communist Party? In reality the Communist International is ignoring one of its own sections, even though that section rallied some six million votes in the election. That is no longer a mere vanguard; it is a great independent army. Why, then, did it take part in the events only as a victim of repression and pogroms? Why, at the decisive hour, did it prove to be stricken with paralysis? There are circumstances under which one cannot withdraw without giving battle. A defeat may result from the superiority of the enemy forces; after defeat one may recover. The passive surrender of all the decisive positions reveals an organic incapacity to fight which does not go unpunished.

The presidium tells us that the policy of the Communist Party was correct "before as well as during the coup d'etat." A correct policy, however, begins with a correct appraisal of the situation. Yet, for the last four years, in fact up to March 5, 1933, we heard day in and day out that a mighty antifascist front was growing uninterruptedly in Germany, that National Socialism was retreating and disintegrating, and that the whole situation was under the aegis of the revolutionary offensive. How could a policy have been correct when the whole analysis on which it was based was knocked over like a house of cards?

The presidium justifies the passive retreat by the fact that the Communist Party, "lacking the support of the majority of the working class," could not engage in a decisive battle without committing a crime. Nevertheless, the same resolution considers the July 20 [1932] call for a general political strike as deserving special praise, though for some unknown reason it neglects to mention an identical call of March 5 [1933]. Is not the general strike a "decisive struggle"? The two strike calls wholly corresponded to the obligations of a "leading role" in the "antifascist united front" under the conditions of the "revolutionary offensive." Unfortunately, the strike calls fell on deaf ears; nobody came out and answered them. But if, between the official interpretation of events and the strike calls on the one hand, and the facts and deeds on the other, there arises such a crying contradiction, it is hard to understand wherein a correct policy can be distinguished from a disastrous one. In any case, the presidium has forgotten to explain which was correct -- the two strike calls or the indifference of the workers to them.

But perhaps the division in the ranks of the proletariat was the cause of the defeat? Such an explanation is created especially for lazy minds. The unity of the proletariat, as a universal slogan, is a myth. The proletariat is not homogeneous. The split begins with the political awakening of the proletariat, and constitutes the mechanics of its growth. Only under the conditions of a ripened social crisis, when it is

faced with the seizure of power as an immediate task, can the vanguard of the proletariat, provided with a correct policy, rally around itself the overwhelming majority of its class. But the rise to this revolutionary peak is accomplished on the steps of successive splits.

It was not Lenin who invented the policy of the united front; like the split within the proletariat it is imposed by the dialectics of the class struggle. No successes would be possible without temporary agreements, for the sake of fulfilling immediate tasks, among various sections, organizations, and groups of the proletariat. Strikes, trade unions, journals, parliamentary elections, street demonstrations, demand that the split be bridged in practice from time to time as the need arises; that is, they demand an ad hoc united front, even if it does not always take on the form of one. In the first stages of a movement, unity arises episodically and spontaneously from below, but when the masses are accustomed to fighting through their organizations, unity must also be established at the top. Under the conditions existing in advanced capitalist countries, the slogan of "only from below" is a gross anachronism, fostered by memories of the first stages of the revolutionary movement, especially in Czarist Russia.

At a certain level, the struggle for unity of action is converted from an elementary fact into a tactical task. The simple formula of the united front solves nothing. It is not only Communists who appeal for unity, but also reformists, and even fascists. The tactical application of the united front is subordinated, in every given period, to a definite strategic conception. In preparing the revolutionary unification of the workers, without and against reformism, a long, persistent, and patient experience in applying the united front with the reformists is necessary; always, of course, from the point of view of the final revolutionary goal. It is precisely in this field that Lenin gave us incomparable examples.

The strategic conception of the Communist International was false from beginning to end. The point of departure of the German Communist Party was that there is nothing but a mere division of labor between the Social Democracy and fascism; that their interests are similar, if not identical. Instead of helping to aggravate the discord between Communism's principal political adversary and its mortal foe -- for which it would have been sufficient to proclaim the truth aloud instead of violating it -- the Communist International convinced the reformists and the fascists that they were twins; it predicted their conciliation, embittered and repulsed the Social Democratic workers, and consolidated their reformist leaders. Worse yet: in every case where, despite the obstacles presented by the leadership, local unity committees for workers' defense were created, the bureaucracy forced its representatives to withdraw under threat of expulsion. It displayed persistency and perseverance only in sabotaging the united front, from above as well as from below. All this it did, to be sure, with the best of intentions.

No policy of the Communist Party could, of course, have transformed the Social Democracy into a party of the revolution. But neither was that the aim. It was necessary to exploit to the limit the contradiction between reformism and fascism -- in order to weaken fascism, at the same time weakening reformism by exposing to the workers the incapacity of the Social Democratic leadership. These two tasks fused naturally into one. The policy of the Comintern bureaucracy led to the opposite result: the capitulation of the reformists served the interests of fascism and not of Communism; the Social Democratic workers remained with their leaders; the Communist workers lost faith in themselves and in the leadership.

The masses wanted to fight, but they were obstinately prevented from doing so by the leaders. Tension, uneasiness, and finally disorientation disrupted the proletariat from within. It is dangerous to keep molten metal too long on the fire; it is still more dangerous to keep society too long in a state of revolutionary crisis. The petty bourgeoisie swung over in its overwhelming majority to the side of National Socialism

only because the proletariat, paralyzed from above, proved powerless to lead it along a different road. The absence of resistance on the part of the workers heightened the self-assurance of fascism and diminished the fear of the big bourgeoisie confronted by the risk of civil war. The inevitable demoralization of the Communist detachment, increasingly isolated from the proletariat rendered impossible even a partial resistance. Thus the triumphal procession of Hitler over the bones of the proletarian organizations was assured.

The false strategic conception of the Communist International collided with reality at every stage, thereby leading to a course of incomprehensible and inexplicable zigzags. The fundamental principle of the Communist International was: a united front with the reformist leaders cannot be permitted! Then, at the most critical hour, the Central Committee of the German Communist Party, without explanation or preparation, appealed to the leaders of the Social Democracy, proposing the united front as an ultimatum: today or never! Both leaders and workers in the reformist camp interpreted this step, not as the product of fear, but, on the contrary, as a diabolical trap. After the inevitable failure of an attempt at compromise, the Communist International ordered that the appeal be ignored and the very idea of a united front was once more proclaimed counterrevolutionary. Such an insult to the political consciousness of the masses could not pass with impunity. If up to March 5 one could, with some difficulty, still image that the Communist International, in its fear of the enemy, might possibly call upon the Social Democracy, at the last moment under the club of the enemy-then the appeal of the presidium on March 5 proposing joint action to the Social Democratic parties of the entire world, independent of the internal conditions of each country, made even this explanation impossible. In this belated and worldwide proposal for a united front, when Germany was revealed by the flames of the Reichstag fire, [1] there was no longer a word about social fascism. The Communist International was even prepared -- it is hard to believe this, but it was printed in black and white! -- to refrain from criticism of the Social Democracy during the whole period of the joint struggle.

The waves of this panic-stricken capitulation to reformism had hardly had time to subside when Weis swore fealty to Hitler, and Leipart offered fascism his assistance and support. "The Communists," the presidium of the Communist International immediately declared, "were right in calling the Social Democrats social fascists." These people are always right Then why did they themselves abandon the theory of social fascism a few days before this unmistakable confirmation of it? Luckily, nobody dares to put embarrassing questions to the leaders. But the misfortunes do not stop there: the bureaucracy thinks too slowly to keep pace with the present tempo of events. Hardly had the presidium fallen back upon the famous revelation: "Fascism and Social Democracy are twins," than Hitler accomplished the complete destruction of the Free Trade Unions and, incidentally, arrested Leipart & Co. The relations between the twin brothers are not entirely brotherly.

Instead of taking reformism as a historic reality, with its interests and its contradictions, with all its oscillations to the right and left the bureaucracy operates with mechanical models. Leipart's readiness to crawl on all fours after the defeat is offered as an argument against the united front before the defeat for the purpose of avoiding the defeat. As if the policy of making fighting agreements with the reformists were based upon the valor of the reformist leaders and not upon the incompatibility of the organs of the proletarian democracy and the fascist bands.

In August 1932, when Germany was still ruled by the "social general Schleicher, who was supposed to assure the union of Hitler with Weis, announced by the Communist International, I wrote: "All signs point to the breakup of the Weis-Schleicher-Hitler triangle even before it had begun to take shape.

"But perhaps it will be replaced by a Hitler-Wels combination?... Let us assume that the Social Democracy would, without fearing its own workers, want to sell its toleration to Hitler. But Hitler does not need this commodity: he needs not the toleration but the abolition of the Social Democracy. The Hitler government can only accomplish its task by breaking the resistance of the proletariat and by removing all the possible organs of its resistance. Therein lies the historical role of fascism" (p. 287).

That the reformists, after the defeat, would be happy if Hitler were to permit them to vegetate legally until better times return, cannot be doubted. But unfortunately for them, Hitler -- the experience of Italy has not been in vain for him -- realizes that the labor organizations, even if their leaders accept a muzzle, would inevitably become a threatening danger at the first political crisis.

Doctor Ley, [2] the corporal of the present "labor front," has determined, with much more logic than the presidium of the Communist International, the relationship between the so-called twins. "Marxism is playing dead," he said on May 2, "in order to rise again at a more favorable opportunity.... The sly fox does not deceive us! It is better for us to deal him the final blow rather than to tolerate him until he recovers. The Leiparts and the Grassmanns [3] may feign all sorts of devotion to Hitler -- but it is better to keep them under lock and key. That is why we are striking out of the hands of the Marxist rabble its principal weapon [the trade unions] and are thus depriving it of the last possibility of arming itself again." If the bureaucracy of the Communist International were not so infallible and if it listened to criticism, it would not have made additional mistakes between March 22, when Leipart swore fealty to Hitler, and May 2, when Hitler, in spite of the oath, arrested him.

Essentially, the theory of "social fascism" could have been refuted even if the fascists had not done such a thorough job of forcing themselves into the trade unions. Even if Hitler had found it necessary, as a result of the relationship of forces, to leave Leipart temporarily and nominally at the head of the trade unions, the agreement would not have eliminated the incompatibility of the fundamental interests. Even though tolerated by fascism, the reformists would remember the fleshpots of the Weimar democracy and that alone would make them concealed enemies. How can one fail to see that the interests of the Social Democracy and of fascism are incompatible when even the independent existence of the Stahlhelm is impossible in the Third Reich? Mussolini tolerated the Social Democracy and even the Communist Party for some time, only to destroy them all the more mercilessly later on. The vote of the Social Democratic deputies in the Reichstag for the foreign policy of Hitler, covering this party with fresh dishonor, will not ameliorate its fate by one iota.

As one of the main causes for the victory of fascism, the luckless leaders refer-in secret, to be sure-to the "genius" of Hitler, who foresaw everything and neglected nothing. It would be fruitless now to submit the fascist policy to a retrospective criticism. One need only remember that Hitler, during the summer of last year, allowed the high peak of the fascist tide to escape him. But even the gross loss of rhythm -- a colossal mistake -- did not have fatal results. The burning of the Reichstag by Goering, even if this act of provocation was crudely executed, did, however, yield the necessary result. The same must be said of the fascist policy as a whole, for it led to victory. One cannot, unfortunately, deny the superiority of the fascist over the proletarian leadership. But it is only out of an unbecoming modesty that the beaten chiefs keep silent about their own part in the victory of Hitler. There is the game of checkers and there is also the game of losers-win. The game that was played in Germany has this singular feature, that Hitler played checkers and his opponents played to lose. As for political genius, Hitler has no need for it. The strategy of his enemy compensated largely for anything his own strategy lacked.



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Leon Trotsky

WHAT IS NATIONAL SOCIALISM?

by

Leon Trotsky

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Naive minds think that the office of kingship lodges in the king himself, in his ermine cloak and his crown, in his flesh and bones. As a matter of fact, the office of kingship is an interrelation between people. The king is king only because the interests and prejudices of millions of people are refracted through his person. When the flood of development sweeps away these interrelations, then the king appears to be only a washed-out man with a flabby lower lip. He who was once called Alfonso XIII could discourse upon this from fresh impressions.[1]

The leader by Will of the people differs from the leader by will of God in that the former is compelled to clear the road for himself or, at any rate, to assist the conjuncture of events in discovering him. Nevertheless, the leader is always a relation between people, the individual supply to meet the collective demand. The controversy over Hitler's personality becomes the sharper the more the secret of his success is sought in himself. In the meantime, another political figure would be difficult to find that is in the same measure the focus of anonymous historic forces. Not every exasperated petty bourgeois could have become Hitler, but a particle of Hitler is lodged in every exasperated petty bourgeois.

The rapid growth of German capitalism prior to the First World War by no means signified a simple destruction of the middle classes. Although it ruined some layers of the petty bourgeoisie it created others anew: around the factories, artisans and shopkeepers; within the factories, technicians and executives. But while preserving themselves and even growing numerically -- the old and the new petty bourgeoisie compose a little less than one-half of the German nation -- the middle classes have lost the last shadow of independence. They live on the periphery of large-scale industry and the banking system, and they live off the crumbs from the table of the monopolies and cartels, and off the spiritual alms of their theorists and professional politicians.

The defeat in 1918 raised a wall in the path of German imperialism. External dynamics changed to internal. The war passed over into revolution. Social Democracy, which aided the Hohenzollerns in bringing the war to its tragic conclusion, did not permit the proletariat to bring the revolution to its conclusion. The Weimar democracy spent fourteen years finding interminable excuses for its own existence. The Communist Party called the workers to a new revolution but proved incapable of leading it. The German proletariat passed through the rise and collapse of war, revolution, parliamentarism, and pseudo-Bolshevism. At the time when the old parties of the bourgeoisie had drained themselves to the dregs, the dynamic power of the working class also found itself sapped.

The postwar chaos hit the artisans, the peddlers, and the civil employees no less cruelly than the workers. The economic crisis in agriculture was ruining the peasantry. The decay of the middle strata did not mean that they were made into proletarians, inasmuch as the proletariat itself was casting out a gigantic army

of chronically unemployed. The pauperization of the petty bourgeoisie, barely covered by ties and socks of artificial silk, eroded all official creeds and first of all the doctrine of democratic parliamentarism.

The multiplicity of parties, the icy fever of elections, the interminable changes of ministries aggravated the social crisis by creating a kaleidoscope of barren political combinations. In the atmosphere brought to white heat by war, defeat, reparations, inflation, occupation of the Ruhr, crisis, need, and despair, the petty bourgeoisie rose up against all the old parties that had bamboozled i.e. The sharp grievances of small proprietors never out of bankruptcy, of their university sons without posts and clients, of their daughters without dowries and suitors, demanded order and an iron hand.

The banner of National Socialism was raised by upstarts from the lower and middle commanding ranks of the old army. Decorated with medals for distinguished service, commissioned and noncommissioned officers could not believe that their heroism and sufferings for the Fatherland had not only come to naught, but also gave them no special claims to gratitude. Hence their hatred of the revolution and the proletariat. At the same time, they did not want to reconcile themselves to being sent by the bankers, industrialists, and ministers back to the modest posts of bookkeepers, engineers, postal clerks, and schoolteachers. Hence their "socialism." At the Yser and under Verdun they had learned to risk themselves and others, and to speak the language of command, which powerfully overawed the petty bourgeois behind the lines. [2] Thus these people became leaders.

At the start of his political career, Hitler stood out only because of his big temperament a voice much louder than others, and an intellectual mediocrity much more self-assured. He did not bring into the movement any ready-made program, if one disregards the insulted soldier's thirst for vengeance. Hitler began with grievances and complaints about the Versailles terms, the high cost of living, the lack of respect for a meritorious noncommissioned officer, and the plots of bankers and journalists of the Mosaic persuasion. There were in the country plenty of ruined and drowning people with scars and fresh bruises. They all wanted to thump with their fists on the table. This Hitler could do better than others. True, he knew not how to cure the evil. But his harangues resounded, now like commands and now like prayers addressed to inexorable fate. Doomed classes, like those fatally ill, never tire of making variations on their complaints nor of listening to consolations. Hitler's speeches were all attuned to this pitch. Sentimental formlessness, absence of disciplined thought ignorance along with gaudy erudition -- all these minuses turned into pluses. They supplied him with the possibility of uniting all types of dissatisfaction in the beggar's bowl of National Socialism, and of leading the mass in the direction in which it pushed him. In the mind of the agitator was preserved, from among his early improvisations, whatever had met with approbation. His political thoughts were the fruits of oratorical acoustics. That is how the selection of slogans went on. That is how the program was consolidated. That is how the "leader" took shape out of the raw material.

Mussolini from the very beginning reacted more consciously to social materials than Hitler, to whom the police mysticism of a Metternich [3] is much closer than the political algebra of Machiavelli. Mussolini is mentally bolder and more cynical. It may be said that the Roman atheist only utilizes religion as he does the police and the courts, while his Berlin colleague really believes in the infallibility of the Church of Rome. During the time when the future Italian dictator considered Marx as "our common immortal teacher," he defended not unskillfully the theory which sees in the life of contemporary society first of all the reciprocal action of two classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. True, Mussolini wrote in 1914, there lie between them very numerous intermediate layers which seemingly form "a joining web of the human collective"; but "during periods of crisis, the intermediate classes gravitate, depending upon their

interests and ideas, to one or the other of the basic classes." A very important generalization! Just as scientific medicine equips one with the possibility not only of curing the sick but of sending the healthy to meet their forefathers by the shortest route, so the scientific analysis of class relations, predestined by its creator for the mobilization of the proletariat, enabled Mussolini, after he had jumped into the opposing camp, to mobilize the middle classes against the proletariat. Hitler accomplished the same feat in translating the methodology of fascism into the language of German mysticism.

The bonfires which burn the impious literature of Marxism light up brilliantly the class nature of National Socialism. While the Nazis acted as a party and not as a state power, they did not quite find an approach to the working class. On the other side, the big bourgeoisie, even those who supported Hitler with money, did not consider his party theirs. The national "renaissance" leaned wholly upon the middle classes, the most backward part of the nation, the heavy ballast of history. Political art consisted in fusing the petty bourgeoisie into oneness through its common hostility to the proletariat. What must be done in order to improve things? First of all, throttle those who are underneath. Impotent before big capital, the petty bourgeoisie hopes in the future to regain its social dignity through the ruin of the workers.

The Nazis call their overturn by the usurped title of revolution. As a matter of fact, in Germany as well as in Italy, fascism leaves the social system untouched. Taken by itself, Hitler's overturn has no right even to the name counterrevolution. But it cannot be viewed as an isolated event; it is the conclusion of a cycle of shocks which began in Germany in 1918. The November Revolution, which gave the power to the workers' and peasants' soviets, was proletarian in its fundamental tendencies. But the party that stood at the head of the proletariat returned the power to the bourgeoisie. In this sense the Social Democracy opened the era of counterrevolution before the revolution could bring its work to completion. However, so long as the bourgeoisie depended upon the Social Democracy, and consequently upon the workers, the regime retained elements of compromise. All the same, the international and the internal situation of German capitalism left no more room for concessions. As Social Democracy saved the bourgeoisie from the proletarian revolution, fascism came in its turn to liberate the bourgeoisie from the Social Democracy. Hitler's coup is only the final link in the chain of counterrevolutionary shifts.

The petty bourgeois is hostile to the idea of development, for development goes immutably against him; progress has brought him nothing except irredeemable debts. National Socialism rejects not only Marxism but Darwinism. The Nazis curse materialism because the victories of technology over nature have signified the triumph of large capital over small. The leaders of the movement are liquidating "intellectualism" because they themselves possess second- and third-rate intellects, and above all because their historic role does not permit them to pursue a single thought to its conclusion. The petty bourgeois needs a higher authority, which stands above matter and above history, and which is safeguarded from competition, inflation, crisis, and the auction block. To evolution, materialist thought, and rationalism -- of the twentieth, nineteenth, and eighteenth centuries -- is counterposed in his mind national idealism as the source of heroic inspiration. Hitler's nation is the mythological shadow of the petty bourgeoisie itself, a pathetic delirium of a thousand-year Reich.

In order to raise it above history, the nation is given the support of the race. History is viewed as the emanation of the race. The qualities of the race are construed without relation to changing social conditions. Rejecting "economic thought" as base, National Socialism descends a stage lower: from economic materialism it appeals to zoologic materialism.

The theory of race, specially created, it seems, for some pretentious self-educated individual seeking a

universal key to all the secrets of life, appears particularly melancholy in the light of the history of ideas. In order to create the religion of pure German blood, Hitler was obliged to borrow at second hand the ideas of racism from a Frenchman, Count Gobineau, [4] a diplomat and a literary dilettante. Hitler found the political methodology ready-made in Italy, where Mussolini had borrowed largely from the Marxist theory of the class struggle. Marxism itself is the fruit of union among German philosophy, French history, and British economics. To investigate retrospectively the genealogy of ideas, even those most reactionary and muddleheaded, is to leave not a trace of racism standing.

The immense poverty of National Socialist philosophy did not, of course, hinder the academic sciences from entering Hitler's wake with all sails unfurled, once his victory was sufficiently plain. For the majority of the professorial rabble, the years of the Weimar regime were periods of riot and alarm. Historians, economists, jurists, and philosophers were lost in guesswork as to which of the contending criteria of truth was right that is, which of the camps would turn out in the end the master of the situation. The fascist dictatorship eliminates the doubts of the Fausts and the vacillations of the Hamlets of the university rostrums. Coming out of the twilight of parliamentary relativity, knowledge once again enters into the kingdom of absolutes. Einstein has been obliged to pitch his tent outside the boundaries of Germany.

On the plane of politics, racism is a vapid and bombastic variety of chauvinism in alliance with phrenology. As the ruined nobility sought solace in the gentility of its blood, so the pauperized petty bourgeoisie befuddles itself with fairy tales concerning the special superiorities of its race. Worthy of attention is the fact that the leaders of National Socialism are not native Germans but interlopers from Austria, like Hitler himself-, from the former Baltic provinces of the Czar's empire, like Rosenberg; and from colonial countries, like Hess, who is Hitler's present alternate for the party leadership. [5] A barbarous din of nationalisms on the frontiers of civilization was required in order to instill into its "leaders" those ideas which later found response in the hearts of the most barbarous classes in Germany.

Personality and class -- liberalism and Marxism -- are evil. The nation -- is good. But at the threshold of private property this philosophy is turned inside out. Salvation lies only in personal private property. The idea of national property is the spawn of Bolshevism. Deifying the nation, the petty bourgeois does not want to give it anything. On the contrary, he expects the nation to endow him with property and to safeguard him from the worker and the process-server. Unfortunately, the Third Reich will bestow nothing upon the petty bourgeois except new taxes.

In the sphere of modern economy, international in its ties and anonymous in its methods, the principle of race seems unearthed from a medieval graveyard. The Nazis set out with concessions beforehand; the purity of race, which must be certified in the kingdom of the spirit by a passport must be demonstrated in the sphere of economy chiefly by efficiency. Under contemporary conditions this means competitive capacity. Through the back door, racism returns to economic liberalism, freed from political liberties.

Nationalism in economy comes down in practice to impotent though savage outbursts of anti-Semitism. The Nazis abstract the usurious or banking capital from the modern economic system because it is of the spirit of evil; and, as is well known, it is precisely in this sphere that the Jewish bourgeoisie occupies an important position. Bowing down before capitalism as a whole, the petty bourgeois declares war against the evil spirit of gain in the guise of the Polish Jew in a long-skirted caftan and usually without a cent in his pocket The pogrom becomes the supreme evidence of racial superiority.

The program with which National Socialism came to power reminds one very much -- alas -- of a Jewish

department store in an obscure province. What won't you find here -- cheap in price and in quality still lower! Recollections of the "happy" days of free competition, and hazy evocations of the stability of class society; hopes for the regeneration of the colonial empire, and dreams of a shut-in economy; phrases about a return from Roman law back to the Germanic, and pleas for an American moratorium; an envious hostility to inequality in the person of a proprietor in an automobile, and animal fear of equality in the person of a worker in a cap and without a collar; the frenzy of nationalism, and the fear of world creditors... all the refuse of international political thought has gone to fill up the spiritual treasury of the new Germanic Messianism.

Fascism has opened up the depths of society for politics. Today, not only in peasant homes but also in city skyscrapers, there lives alongside of the twentieth century the tenth or the thirteenth. A hundred million people use electricity and still believe in the magic power of signs and exorcisms. The Pope of Rome broadcasts over the radio about the miraculous transformation of water into wine. Movie stars go to mediums. Aviators who pilot miraculous mechanisms created by man's genius wear amulets on their sweaters. What inexhaustible reserves they possess of darkness, ignorance, and savagery! Despair has raised them to their feet fascism has given them a banner. Everything that should have been eliminated from the national organism in the form of cultural excrement in the course of the normal development of society has now come gushing out from the throat; capitalist society is puking up the undigested barbarism. Such is the physiology of National Socialism.

German fascism, like Italian fascism, raised itself to power on the backs of the petty bourgeoisie, which it turned into a battering ram against the organizations of the working class and the institutions of democracy. But fascism in power is least of all the rule of the petty bourgeoisie. On the contrary, it is the most ruthless dictatorship of monopoly capital. Mussolini is right: the middle classes are incapable of independent policies. During periods of great crisis they are called upon to reduce to absurdity the policies of one of the two basic classes. Fascism succeeded in putting them at the service of capital. Such slogans as state control of trusts and the elimination of unearned income were thrown overboard immediately upon the assumption of power. Instead, the particularism of German "lands" leaning upon the peculiarities of the petty bourgeoisie gave way to capitalist-police centralism. Every success of the internal and foreign policies of National Socialism will inevitably mean the further crushing of small capital by large.

The program of petty-bourgeois illusions is not discarded; it is simply torn away from reality, and dissolved in ritualistic acts. The unification of all classes reduces itself to semisymbolic compulsory labor and to the confiscation of the labor holiday of May Day for the "benefit of the people." The preservation of the Gothic script as opposed to the Latin is a symbolic revenge for the yoke of the world market. The dependence upon the international bankers, Jews among their number, is not eased an iota, wherefore it is forbidden to slaughter animals according to the Talmudic ritual. If the road to hell is paved with good intentions, then the avenues of the Third Reich are paved with symbols.

Reducing the program of petty-bourgeois illusions to a naked bureaucratic masquerade, National Socialism raises itself over the nation as the worst form of imperialism. Absolutely vain are hopes that Hitler's government will fail today or tomorrow, a victim of its internal inconsistency. The Nazis required the program in order to assume power; but power serves Hitler not at all for the purpose of fuming the program. His tasks are assigned him by monopoly capital. The compulsory concentration of all forces and resources of the people in the interests of imperialism -- the true historic mission of the fascist dictatorship -- means preparation for war; and this task, in its turn, brooks no internal resistance and leads

to a further mechanical concentration of power. Fascism cannot be reformed or retired from service. It can only be overthrown. The political orbit of the regime leans upon the alternative, war or revolution.

POSTSCRIPT

P. S.: The first anniversary of the Nazi dictatorship is approaching. All the tendencies of the regime have had time to take on a clear and distinct character. The "socialist" revolution pictured by the petty-bourgeois masses as a necessary supplement to the national revolution is officially liquidated and condemned. The brotherhood of classes found its culmination in the fact that on a day especially appointed by the government the haves renounced the hors d'oeuvre and dessert in favor of the have-nots. The struggle against unemployment is reduced to the cutting of semistarvation doles in two. The rest is the task of uniformed statistics. "Planned" autarky is simply a new stage of economic disintegration.

The more impotent the police regime of the Nazi is in the field of national economy, the more it is forced to transfer its efforts to the field of foreign policy. This corresponds fully to the inner dynamics of German capitalism, aggressive through and through. The sudden turn of the Nazi leaders to peaceful declarations could deceive only utter simpletons. What other method remains at Hitler's disposal to transfer the responsibility for internal distresses to external enemies and to accumulate under the press of the dictatorship the explosive force of nationalism? This part of the program, outlined openly even prior to the Nazis' assumption of power, is now being fulfilled with iron logic before the eyes of the world. The date of the new European catastrophe will be determined by the time necessary for the arming of Germany. It is not a question of months, but neither is it a question of decades. It will be but a few years before Europe is again plunged into a war, unless Hitler is forestalled in time by the inner forces of Germany.

November 2, 1933

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Leon Trotsky

HOW LONG CAN HITLER STAY?

by

Leon Trotsky

Written in exile in Turkey, June 22 1933

Translated for *Class Struggle*, September-October and November 1933

The American Mercury, January 1934

After a fire, it is difficult to arrange things anew. It is even more difficult after a great political defeat to determine the road again. Reluctantly do parties admit that they have been beaten, especially if a great deal of the fault for the defeat lies with them. The greater the extent of the defeat the more difficult it is for political thought to pass over to new positions, to work out a new perspective and to subordinate to it the direction and tempo of further work.

The history of military science, like the history of the revolutionary struggle, records a great number of supplementary defeats that came as a result of the fact that the leadership, not having evaluated the extent of the basic defeat tried to cover it up by untimely attacks. In war, criminal attempts of this sort lead to a mass destruction of living forces, already morally undermined by previous setbacks. In the revolutionary struggle, the most militant elements, already torn away from the masses by previous defeats, fall victim to adventures.

The present catastrophe in Germany is undoubtedly the greatest defeat of the working class in history. AR the more urgent therefore, does a complete strategic turn become, but all the more stubborn, on the other hand, is the resistance of the party bureaucracy. It labels as "defeatists" not those who brought on the defeat -- it would be obliged to name itself -- but those who draw the necessary political conclusions from the fact of the defeat. The struggle now unfolding around the question of the perspectives of political development in Germany has an exceptional significance for the fate of Europe and of the whole world.

In this connection we shall omit from consideration the Social Democracy: the revolting decomposition of this party leaves it no possibility even for maneuvers of bureaucratic prestige. The leaders do not even try to pretend that they have any ideas or plans. After completely losing their heads politically, their concern is directed towards saving their heads physically. These people have been preparing their dishonorable defeat by their whole policy since the beginning of the imperialist war.

Only the orientation of the Communist Party is now of political interest. As a mass organization, it is completely demolished. But the central apparatus is preserved, issuing illegal and emigrant literature, calling abroad antifascist congresses, and working out plans for the struggle against the dictatorship of the Nazis. All the vices of defeated staffs now find in this apparatus their unsurpassed expression.

"The fascists are Caliphs for an hour," writes the official organ of the Comintern. "Their victory is not a lasting one, and after it will quickly follow the proletarian revolution.... The struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat stands on the order of the day in Germany." Constantly giving ground, surrendering every position, losing its own adherents, the apparatus continues to reiterate that the antifascist wave is mounting, that its spirits are rising, that it is necessary to be prepared for an insurrection, if not tomorrow, then in a few months from now. Optimistic phraseology has become a means of political

self-preservation for the beaten commanding staff. The danger of spurious optimism is all the greater the more deeply the inner life of the German proletariat is plunged into darkness: there are neither trade unions, parliamentary elections, membership dues, nor newspaper circulation -- no data whatsoever can emerge to control the consequences of a false policy or disturb the equanimity of the leaders.

The main reason for the reassuring prognosis consists in the fact that Hitler "will not fulfill his promises." As if Mussolini had to fulfill his fantastic program in order to maintain himself in power for more than ten years! A revolution is not an automatic punishment for swindlers, but a complex social phenomenon which arises only when a series of historical conditions are at hand. We shall recall them once more: the bewilderment and the division of the ruling classes; the indignation of the petty bourgeoisie and its loss of faith in the existing order; the growing militant activity of the working class; finally, a correct policy of the revolutionary party -- such are the immediate prerequisites for a revolution. Are they at hand?

For the past couple of years the possessing classes of Germany have been in a state of the cruelest internecine war. Now all of them -- even though with a heavy heart -- submit to fascism. The antagonism between the agrarians and the industrialists, as well as between separate groups of industrialists, has not disappeared; but you may be sure that it will soon be regulated.

The petty bourgeoisie of Germany seethed like a boiling kettle in the last period. Even in its nationalistic raving, there was an element of social danger. Now it is united around a government which rose up upon its back and is disciplined by a purely military organization which emerged out of its midst. The middle

mechanical and direct dependence of consciousness upon external circumstances. Existence refracts itself in consciousness according to the laws of consciousness. One and the same objective fact may have a different, sometimes an opposite, political effect, depending upon the general situation and preceding events. Thus, in the march of development of humanity, repressions frequently call forth revolutionary indignation. But after the triumph of counterrevolution, repressions have more than once snuffed out the last flare of protest. The economic crisis can hasten the revolutionary explosion, and that has happened more than once in history; but crashing down upon the proletariat after a heavy political defeat, the crisis can only aggravate the process of decomposition. Let us put it more concretely. We do not expect immediate revolutionary consequences for Germany from the further deepening of the industrial crisis.

To be sure, history records that a long-lasting industrial revival has frequently given the upper hand to opportunistic currents within the proletariat. But after a lengthy period of crisis and reaction, the rising conjuncture may, on the contrary, raise the level of activity of the workers and impel them towards the road of struggle. We regard this variant as in many respects the more likely one.

However, the center of gravity does not lie at present in the conjunctural prognosis. Weighty psychological turns of many- millioned masses demand lengthy intervals: this should be the point of departure. The break in the conjuncture, collisions in the ranks of the possessing classes, international complications, may and will have their effects upon the workers.

But external events cannot simply annul the inner laws of mass consciousness, cannot permit the proletariat to erase the consequences of the defeat all at once and thereby open up a new page in the book of the revolutionary struggle. Even if due to an especially favorable conjuncture of internal and external conditions, the beginning of the turn were to reveal itself after an exceptionally short interval, let us say in a year or two, the question of what our policy should be would stay the same for the next twelve or twenty-four months, while the counterrevolution was still making further conquests. Realistic tactics cannot be developed without a correct perspective. There can be no correct perspective without understanding that it is not a maturing of the proletarian revolution which is taking place now in Germany but a deepening of the fascist counterrevolution. And that is not one and the same thing!

Bureaucracy, the revolutionaries included, forgets too easily that the proletariat is not only an object but also a subject of politics. By means of blows on the head, the Nazis aim to turn the workers into homunculi of racism. The leadership of the Comintern, on the contrary, reckons that the blows of Hitler will make the workers obedient Communists. Both calculations are wrong. Workers are not clay in the hands of a potter. They do not each time begin history all over again. Hating and despising the Nazis, they are least of all inclined, however, to return to that policy which led them into the noose of Hitler. The workers feel themselves cheated and betrayed by their own leadership. They do not know what must be done, but they know what must not be done. They are unspeakably tortured, and they want to break away from the vicious circle of confusion, threats, lies, and braggadocio, to step aside, to duck, to wait for the storm to blow over, to rest up from the necessity of deciding questions that are beyond them. They need time for the wounds of disillusionment to heal. The generalized name for this state is political indifference. The masses fall into an irascible passivity. A number, and no small one, finds cover in fascist organizations. It is not permissible, of course, to put demonstrative passage to the side of fascism by individual politicians on the same plane as the anonymous entrance of workers into the compulsory organizations of the dictatorship. The first is a question of careerism; the second of protective coloration, of submission to the boss. Nevertheless, the fact of the mass shifting of workers under the banner of the swastika is irrefutable evidence of the feeling of helplessness which has gripped the proletariat. The

reaction has plainly penetrated into the very bones of the working class. This is not for a single day.

In this general situation, the clamorous party bureaucracy, which has forgotten nothing and learned nothing, represents an obvious political anachronism. The workers are nauseated by the official infallibility. A void grows around the apparatus. The worker does not want, in addition to the knout of Hitler, to be whipped by the knout of spurious optimism. He wants the truth. The crying discord between the official perspective and the real state of affairs only introduces an additional element of demoralization into the ranks of the advanced workers.

What is called the radicalization of the masses is a complex molecular process of collective consciousness. In order to get back to the road, the workers must first of all understand what has

But right now, when the German workers are passing through painful disappointment and degradation, it is absurd to expect that they will engage in a serious struggle under the leadership of fascist bureaucrats. The factory committees will be chosen from the top and trained as agencies for the betrayal and suppression of the workers.

No self-deception! A defeat covered up by illusions means ruin. Salvation lies in clarity. Only a merciless criticism of all failures and errors can prepare the great revenge.

It may be considered established by experience that German fascism operates at a speedier tempo than Italian fascism -- not only because Hitler can take advantage of the experience of Mussolini, but primarily because of the higher-level social structure of Germany and the greater acuteness of its contradictions. It is permissible to conclude from this that National Socialism in power will wear itself out sooner than its Italian precursor. But even while degenerating and decomposing, National Socialism cannot fall of itself. It must be overthrown. The changing of the political regime in present-day Germany cannot be realized without an insurrection. True, for such an insurrection there is at present no direct and immediate prospect; but no matter what devious path developments should take, they must inevitably break through to insurrection.

As is known, the petty bourgeoisie is incapable of an independent revolutionary policy. But the policy and moods of the petty bourgeoisie are not at all a matter of indifference for the fate of the regime created with its assistance. The disappointment and discontent of the intermediary classes will turn National Socialism, as they have already turned Italian fascism, from a people's movement into a police apparatus. No matter how strong it may be in itself, the apparatus cannot substitute for the living current of counterrevolution penetrating into all the pores of society. The bureaucratic degeneration of fascism therefore means the beginning of its end.

At this stage, however, a new difficulty must reveal itself Under the influence of defeat, the inhibitory centers of the proletariat are hypertrophied. The workers become cautious, distrustful, and expectant. Even if the volcanic eruption of the reaction has ceased, the hardened lava of the fascist state recalls too threateningly what has been lived through. Such is the political situation in present-day Italy. To borrow from the terminology of economics, it may be said that the disappointment and dissatisfaction of petty-bourgeois reaction prepares the moment when the sharp crisis of the workers' movement will pass over into a depression which will then, at a certain stage, give way to revival To attempt to foretell now how and when and under what slogans this revival will begin would be a merely futile occupation: even the stages of an economic cycle always have an unexpected character; all the more so the stages of political development

For an organism which has just passed through a grave illness, correct treatment is especially important. As for the workers over whom the roller of fascism has passed, adventuristic tactics will inevitably produce a relapse into apathy. Thus, a premature speculation in stocks frequently carries with it a recurrence of the crisis. The example of Italy shows that a state of political depression, especially with a false political leadership, may drag out for years. A correct policy demands not that artificial lines of march be imposed upon the proletariat, but that the perspectives and slogans of struggle be drawn from the living dialectics of the movement Favorable external stimuli may greatly shorten the separate stages of the process: it is not at all necessary that the depression should last for years as in Italy. It is, however, impossible to jump over the organic stages of the rise of the masses. To accelerate, without trying to jump over -- therein lies the whole art of revolutionary leadership! Once having torn itself from under the

leaden weight of fascism, the working class movement may, in a comparatively short time, take on a wide scope. Only after that, and only under the leadership of the proletariat, can the discontent of the petty bourgeoisie acquire a progressive political character and reestablish a favorable situation for the revolutionary struggle.

The ruling classes will have to confront the other side of this process. Having lost support in the petty bourgeoisie, the fascist state will become a very untrustworthy apparatus of subjection. The politicians of capital will have to orient themselves anew. The contradictions in the midst of the possessing classes will break through to the surface.

Facing masses which go over to an offensive, Hitler will find that he has an unreliable rear. The immediate revolutionary situation will thus come into being, heralding the last hour of National Socialism.

But before the proletariat is able to set itself great tasks, it must draw up the balance of the past Its most general formula

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Leon Trotsky's

TO BUILD COMMUNIST PARTIES AND AN INTERNATIONAL ANEW

July 15, 1933

THE ORIENTATION TOWARD REFORMING THE COMINTERN

From the day it was founded the Left Opposition has set itself the task of reforming the Comintern and regenerating the latter through Marxist criticism and internal faction work. In a whole number of countries, especially in Germany, the events of recent years have revealed with overwhelming force the fatal character of the policies of bureaucratic centrism. But the Stalinist bureaucracy, armed with extraordinary resources, has managed not unsuccessfully to counterpose its caste interests and prejudices to the demands of historical development. As a result, the evolution of the Comintern has unfolded not along the line of regeneration but along that of corrosion and disintegration.

But the orientation toward "reform," taken as a whole, was not a mistake: it represented a necessary stage in the development of the Marxist wing of the Comintern; it provided an opportunity for training cadres of Bolshevik-Leninists; and it did not pass without leaving its mark on the working-class movement as a whole. The policy of the Stalinist bureaucracy throughout this period remained under the pressure of the Left Opposition. The progressive measures adopted by the government of the USSR, which acted to check the offensive of Thermidor, were only partial and belated borrowings from the Left Opposition. Analogous manifestations, but on a smaller scale, could be observed in the life of all the sections of the Comintern.

It should be added that the degree of degeneration of a revolutionary party cannot, as a rule, be established a priori, on the basis of symptoms alone. The living verification of events is indispensable. Theoretically it was still impermissible last year to have considered as absolutely excluded that the Bolshevik-Leninists, basing themselves on the sharpening of the class struggle, could succeed in impelling the Comintern to take the road of actual struggle against fascism. The simultaneous attempt of the SAP in Germany to assume an independent position did not exert an influence on the course of events precisely because the masses were waiting in the critical moment for the political leadership of their old organizations. In conducting the policy of a faction and educating its cadres on the experience of this policy, the Left Opposition, however, did not hide from itself nor from others that a new defeat of the proletariat, resulting from the policy of centrism, would inevitably acquire a decisive character and would demand a drastic review of our position on the question: faction or party?

THE CHANGE OF ORIENTATION

The most dangerous thing in politics is to fall captive to one's own formula that yesterday was appropriate, but is bereft of all content today.

Theoretically, the collapse of the German Communist Party still left two courses open to the Stalinist bureaucracy: either a complete review of the politics and the regime; or, on the contrary, a complete strangulation of all signs of life in the sections of the Comintern. The Left Opposition was guided by this theoretical possibility when, after advancing the slogan of a new party for Germany, it still left open the question of the fate of the Comintern. It was, however, clear that the next few weeks would bring an answer and there was far too little hope that the answer would be a favorable one.

Everything that has taken place since March 5: the resolution of the presidium of the ECCI on the situation in Germany; the silent submission of all the sections to this shameful resolution; the antifascist congress in Paris; the official line of the emigre Central Committee of the German Communist Party; the fate of the Austrian Communist Party; the fate of the Bulgarian Communist Party, etc-all this testifies incontestably that the fate of not only the German Communist Party but also the entire Comintern was decided in Germany.

The Moscow leadership has not only proclaimed as infallible the policy which guaranteed victory to Hitler, but has also prohibited all discussion of what had occurred. And this shameful interdiction was not violated, nor overthrown. No national congresses; no international congress; no discussions at party meetings; no discussion in the press! An organization which was not roused by the thunder of fascism and which submits docilely to such outrageous acts of the bureaucracy demonstrates thereby that it is dead and that nothing can ever revive it. To say this openly and publicly is our direct duty toward the proletariat and its future. In all our subsequent work it is necessary to take as our point of departure the historical collapse of the official Communist International.

REALISM VERSUS PESSIMISM

The fact that two parties, the Social Democratic and the Communist, which arose half a century apart and which both proceeded from the theory of Marxism and the class interests of the proletariat, could have come to such a sad end - the one through base treachery, the other through bankruptcy - can engender pessimistic moods even among the advanced workers. "Where is the guarantee that a new revolutionary selection will not suffer the same fate?" Those who demand guarantees in advance should in general renounce revolutionary politics. The causes for the downfall of the Social Democracy and of official Communism must be sought not in Marxist theory and not in the bad qualities of those people who applied it, but in the concrete conditions of the historical process. It is not a question of counterposing abstract principles, but rather of the struggle of living social forces, with its inevitable ups and downs, with the degeneration of organizations, with the passing of entire generations into discard, and with the necessity which therefore arises of mobilizing fresh forces on a new historical stage. No one has bothered to pave in advance the road of revolutionary upsurge for the proletariat. With inevitable halts and partial retreats it is necessary to move forward on a road crisscrossed by countless obstacles and covered with the debris of the past. Those who are frightened by this had better step aside.

But how explain the fact that our grouping, whose analysis and prognosis has been verified by the entire course of events, is growing so slowly? The cause must be looked for in the general course of the class

struggle. The victory of fascism seizes tens of millions. Political prognoses are accessible only to thousands or tens of thousands who, moreover, feel the pressure of millions. A revolutionary tendency cannot score stormy victories at a time when the proletariat as a whole is suffering the greatest defeats. But this is no justification for letting one's hands hang. Precisely in the periods of revolutionary ebb tide are cadres formed and tempered which will later be called upon to lead the masses in the new assault.

NEW REVERSES

Those attempts which were made more than once in the past to create a "second party" or the "Fourth International" emanated from the sectarian experience of isolated groups and circles "disillusioned" with Bolshevism and, in consequence, led each time to failure. We take as the point of departure not our own subjective "dissatisfaction" and "disillusionment" but the objective march of the class struggle. All the conditions of the development of the proletarian revolution imperiously demand a new organization of the vanguard and provide the necessary prerequisites for it.

The disintegration of the Social Democracy now proceeds parallel with the collapse of the Comintern. However profound the reaction within the proletariat itself, hundreds of thousands of workers in the whole world must already be asking themselves about the further course of struggle and a new organization of forces. Other hundreds of thousands will join them in the near future. To demand of these workers, a section of whom left the Comintern with indignation, while the majority did not belong to the Comintern even in its best years, that they formally accept the leadership of the Stalinist bureaucracy, which is incapable of forgetting or learning anything, is to occupy oneself with Quixotism and to hinder the formation of the proletarian vanguard.

Undoubtedly, in the ranks of the Stalinist organizations, will be found sincere Communists, who will greet with fear and even with indignation our new orientation. Some of them might perhaps temporarily replace a feeling of sympathy with one of hostility. But it is necessary to be guided not by sentimental and personal considerations but by mass criteria.

At a time when hundreds of thousands and millions of workers, especially in Germany, are departing from Communism, in part to fascism and in the main into the camp of indifferentism, thousands and tens of thousands of Social Democratic workers, under the impact of the self-same defeat, are evolving to the left, to the side of Communism. There cannot however, even be talk of their accepting the hopelessly discredited Stalinist leadership.

Up till now these left socialist organizations have held against us our refusal to break with the Comintern and to build independent parties. This sharp disagreement has now been removed by the march of development. Thereby the discussion of formal, organizational questions is shifted over to the programmatic, political plane. The new party will rise higher than the old one only if, by taking its stand firmly on the grounds of the decisions of the first four congresses of the Comintern, it is capable in its program, strategy, tactics, and organization of taking into account the terrible lessons of the last ten years.

The Bolshevik-Leninists must enter into open discussions with the revolutionary socialist organizations. As the basis for discussion we shall propose the eleven points adopted by our Pre-Conference (after changing the point on "faction and party" in the spirit of the present theses). We are, of course, prepared to discuss attentively and in a comradely manner all other programmatic proposals. We must and shall

demonstrate that principled irreconcilability has nothing in common with sectarian snobbishness. We shall show that Marxist politics consists in attracting reformist workers into the camp of revolution and not in repelling revolutionary workers into the camp of fascism.

The formation in several countries of strong revolutionary organizations, free of any responsibility for the crimes and mistakes of the reformist and centrist bureaucracies, armed with the Marxist program and a clear revolutionary perspective, will open a new era in the development of the world proletariat. These organizations will attract all the genuine Communist elements who still cannot bring themselves today to break with the Stalinist bureaucracy, and, what is more important, they will gradually attract under their banner the young generation of workers.

THE USSR AND THE CPSU

The existence of the Soviet Union, despite the far-advanced degeneration of the workers' state, remains even now a fact of immeasurable revolutionary significance. The collapse of the Soviet Union would lead to terrible reaction in the whole world, perhaps for decades to come. The struggle for the preservation, rehabilitation, and strengthening of the first workers' state is indissolubly bound up with the struggle of the world proletariat for the socialist revolution.

The dictatorship of the Stalinist bureaucracy arose as a result of the backwardness of the USSR (the predominance of the peasantry) and the tardiness of the proletarian revolution in the West (the absence of independent revolutionary parties of the proletariat). In its turn, the rule of the Stalinist bureaucracy has led not only to the degeneration of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviet Union, but also to the terrible weakening of the proletarian vanguard in the whole world. The contradiction between the progressive role of the Soviet state and the reactionary role of the Stalinist bureaucracy is one of the manifestations of the "law of uneven development" In our revolutionary politics we must take this historically given contradiction as our point of departure.

The so-called friends of the Soviet Union (left democrats, pacifists, Brandlerites, and the like) repeat the argument of the Comintern functionaries that the struggle against the Stalinist bureaucracy, i.e., first of all criticism of its false policies, "helps the counterrevolution." This is the standpoint of the political lackeys of the bureaucracy,, but never that of revolutionists. The Soviet Union both internally and externally can be defended only by means of a correct policy. All other considerations are either secondary or simply lying phrases.

The present CPSU is not a party but an apparatus of domination in the hands of an uncontrolled bureaucracy. Within the framework of the CPSU and outside of it takes place the grouping of the scattered elements of the two basic parties: the proletarian and the Thermidorean-Bonapartist. Rising above both of them, the centrist bureaucracy wages a war of annihilation against the Bolshevik-Leninists. While coming into sharp clashes from time to time with their Thermidorean half-allies, the Stalinists, nevertheless, clear the road for the latter by crushing, strangling, and corrupting the Bolshevik Party.

If without proletarian revolution in the West the USSR cannot come to socialism, then without the regeneration of a genuine proletarian International, the Russian Bolshevik-Leninists will not be able, with their own forces alone, to regenerate the Bolshevik Party and to save the dictatorship of the proletariat.

THE USSR AND THE COMINTERN

The defense of the Soviet Union against the threat of military intervention has now become a task more acute than ever before. The official sections of the Comintern are as impotent in this field as in all others. On their lips, the defense of the Soviet Union has become a ritualistic phrase, bereft of all content. The inadequacy of the Comintern is being covered up by such undignified comedies as the antiwar congress in Amsterdam and the antifascist congress in Paris. The actual resistance of the Comintern to the military intervention of the imperialists will prove even more insignificant than its resistance to Hitler. To nourish any illusions on this score is to head blindfolded toward a new catastrophe. For the active defense of the Soviet Union genuine revolutionary organizations are needed, independent of the Stalinist bureaucracy, standing on their own feet and enjoying support among the masses.

The establishment and growth of these revolutionary organizations, their struggle for the Soviet Union, their constant readiness for a united front with the Stalinists against intervention and counterrevolution - all this will have an enormous importance for the internal development of the Soviet republic. The Stalinists, insofar as they remain in power, will have all the less opportunity to evade the united front as the dangers, both domestic and foreign, become more acute, and as the independent organization of the world proletarian vanguard becomes a greater force. The new relationship of forces will act to weaken the dictatorship of the bureaucracy, to strengthen the Bolshevik-Leninists inside the USSR, and to open up before the workers' republic as a whole far more favorable perspectives.

Only the creation of the Marxist International, completely independent of the Stalinist bureaucracy and counterposed politically to it, can save the USSR from collapse by binding its destiny with the destiny of the world proletarian revolution.

"LIQUIDATIONISM"

Bureaucratic charlatans (and their lackeys, like the Brandlerites) talk about our "liquidationism. " They repeat senselessly and unconscionably words torn out of the old vocabulary of Bolshevism. Liquidationism was the designation given to that tendency which, under "constitutional" Czarism, rejected the need for an illegal party, for it sought to replace revolutionary struggle by an adaptation to counterrevolutionary "legality." What have we in common with the liquidators? It is far more appropriate to recall in this connection the ultimatists (Bogdanov and others) who fully recognized the need of an illegal organization but turned it into an instrument of hopelessly false policies: after the crushing of the revolution they posed as the immediate task the preparation of an armed uprising. Lenin did not hesitate to break with them, although there were not a few impeccable revolutionists among them. (The best of them later returned to the ranks of Bolshevism.)

Equally false in character are the assertions of Stalinists and their Brandlerite lackeys to the effect that the Left Opposition is creating an "August Conference" against "Bolshevism." Referred to here is the attempt of 1912, one of the innumerable attempts to unite Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. (Let us recall that Stalin made such an attempt not in August 1912, but in March 1917!) For this analogy to have even a shadow of meaning, it would be necessary in the first place to acknowledge the Stalinist bureaucracy as the bearer of Bolshevism; and secondly, it would be necessary for us to pose the question of uniting the Second and Third Internationals. There cannot even be talk of either proposition! The charlatan analogy is designed to cover up the fact that the Brandlerite opportunists are trying to curry favor with the Stalinist centrists on the basis of a mutual amnesty, whereas the Bolshevik-Leninists are posing the task

of building the proletarian party on a principled foundation, tested in the greatest battles, the victories and defeats of the imperialist epoch.

ON THE NEW ROAD

The task of these theses is to summon the comrades to cross off the completed historical stage and to sketch out new perspectives for work. But what has been said above does not at all predetermine the immediate practical steps, the concrete changes in policy, the tempos and method of shifting to the new road. Only after a principled unanimity has been secured with regard to the new orientation - and our previous experience permits me to think that such a unanimity will be achieved by us - will there be placed on the order of the day the concrete tactical questions applicable to the conditions in each separate country.

In any case, under discussion now is not the immediate proclamation of new parties and of an independent International, but of preparing for them. The new perspective signifies first of all that talk of "reform" and demands to restore oppositionists in the official parties must be put aside as utopian and reactionary. The day-to-day work must assume an independent character, determined by our own possibilities and forces, and not by the formal criterion of "faction." The Left Opposition ceases completely to feel and act as an "opposition." It becomes an independent organization, clearing its own road. It not only builds its own fractions in the Social Democratic and Stalinist parties, but conducts independent work among nonparty and unorganized workers. It creates its own bases of support in the trade unions, independently of the trade-union policy of the Stalinist bureaucracy. It participates in elections under its own banner, whenever favorable conditions for this obtain. In relation to reformist and centrist labor organizations (including the Stalinists) it is guided by the general principles of the united-front policy. In particular, it applies the policy of the united front especially in order to defend the USSR against external intervention and internal counterrevolution.



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Leon Trotsky
***IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO REMAIN IN THE SAME
INTERNATIONAL
WITH THE STALINS, MANUILSKYS, LOZOVSKYS &
CO.
(A Conversation)***

by
Leon Trotsky
July 20, 1933

"It Is Impossible to Remain in the Same 'International' with the Stalins, Manuiskys, Lozovskys & Co.," signed with a penname, appeared in the Bulletin of the Opposition, no. 36-37, October 1933, and was translated for The Militant October 21, 1933. Trotsky had received a visa to live in France, and this article was written on the Bulgaria, an Italian ship, en route from Turkey to Marseilles.

A. It is time to break with the Moscow caricature of an International. It is impossible to bear even a shadow of political responsibility for the Stalinists. We have been very prudent and very patient with regard to the Comintern; but there is a limit to everything: now that Hitler has been placed in the saddle, before the whole world, by Weis on one side and Stalin on the other; now that the Comintern, despite the catastrophe, has proclaimed its policy infallible -- no sensible man will any longer hope that this clique can be "reformed."

B. The clique certainly not, but the Comintern taken as a whole?

A. One must not be deceived by general phrases. The "Comintern as a whole is an abstraction, not to say an empty expression. Control is in the hands of the Stalinist clique. For six years now there has been no congress. Who has trampled on the statutes? The clique. By what right? By the right of usurpation. Not one section, not one local organization, not one paper has dared to breathe a word about the necessity for an International Congress. This means that in fact the fate of the "Comintern as a whole" lies in the hands of an irresponsible clique.

B. That is incontestable, but isn't that just how things stood a year ago, when we had not yet withdrawn the slogan of the reform of the Comintern?

A. No. That is not how the matter stood. A year ago, one still could hope to salvage the situation in Germany. We did everything in our power to throw light on the logic of the situation. If the Comintern had been a viable organization, its leadership could not have failed to hear the voice of events: it is absolutely impossible to expect a more powerful voice. And if the Comintern remained deaf this time, it means that it is a corpse. In still another respect, a decisive change has taken place: last year, the German Communist Party still existed. In the whirlpool of great events, it still had to reckon with the working masses. One had a certain right to hope, right up to the hour of the verification, that the development of the struggle of the masses would reverse not only Thaelmann's Central Committee, but also the presidium of Stalin-Manuisky. That did not happen. Of the German Communist Party nothing has been

left but an apparatus that grows weaker every day and becomes increasingly alienated from the masses. The point has been reached where the Central Committee prohibits the local illegal organizations from publishing their own articles and appeals: the duty of the local committees is only to reprint the revelations of the Manuilskys and the Heckerts. 1 Every movement of thought represents a mortal danger for these people. The victory of Hitler is not really a "defeat" for them; it has freed them from all control from below... But now that the strongest party of the Comintern has left the stage, there is decidedly no means, no channel, and no lever left by which to act upon the clique that rules the Comintern.

B. Can the German Communist Party be spoken of as the strongest party of the Comintern? Have you forgotten the Communist Party of the Soviet Union?

A. No, I have not forgotten. Even if one recognizes that the CPSU is a party (in reality, within the administrative cadres of the CPSU, which change according to the will of the clique, several parties are conducting a covert struggle against each other), this party is, in any case, not an active section of the Comintern. The Soviet workers have no idea of what is happening to the proletarian movement in the West: nothing is communicated to them or, still worse, they are ignobly deceived. Within the Politburo itself, with its present composition, there is not a single person who knows the life and the tendencies of the workers' movement in the capitalist countries.

The slogan of the "reform" of the Comintern was, for us, never a hollow phrase. We counted on reform as on a reality. Developments followed the worst road. That is precisely why we are compelled to declare that the policy of reform is exhausted to the very end.

B. Is it possible for us, then, to leave the centrist bureaucracy heir to the banner of the Comintern?

A. One should not be misled by ambiguous formulas. What is understood by a banner? A program? But long since we rejected the program adopted by the Sixth Congress as a pernicious admixture of opportunism and adventurism. In the course of several years, basing ourselves on the lessons of events, we counted upon changing the program of the Comintern by internal means. Now this possibility has disappeared at the same time as the possibility of "reform." To the miserable, eclectic program of the Comintern, we must oppose our Marxist program.

B. And the first four congresses of the Comintern?

A. Naturally, we do not abandon them, especially since the Stalinists have long ago renounced them and given them over to us. We will build our program upon the foundation established by the first four congresses: it is an irreproachable Marxist foundation; it is our foundation. Only the Left Opposition has translated the lessons of the last ten years into the language of Marxism. Our International Pre-Conference has summed up these lessons in its eleven points. There is, however, an omission from the total. The Pre-Conference met on the eve of the decisive examination to which history submitted the Comintern. The complete and conclusive collapse of the Comintern is not recorded in the decisions of the Pre-Conference. It must be done by the Conference. As far as everything else goes, the decisions of the Pre-Conference retain all their force. The principal documents of the first four congresses plus the eleven points of the Left Opposition -- these are the fundamental elements of the true program of the Communist International.

B. The opponents, in spite of everything, will say that we are renouncing the banner of Lenin.

A. The opponents have been shouting that for some time, and all the more loudly the more they trample

the heritage of Bolshevism into the mud. As for us, we shall say to the workers of the entire world that we are taking upon ourselves the defense of the banner of Marx and Lenin, the continuation and development of their work in the intransigent struggle not only against the reformist traitors -- that goes without saying but also against the centrist falsifiers of Bolshevism, usurpers of the banner of Lenin, organizers of defeats and capitulations, and corrupters of the proletarian vanguard: the Stalinists.

B. Then what is to be done about the CPSU? What is to be done about the USSR? Won't the opponents say that we consider as lost the achievements of the workers' state and that we are preparing armed insurrection against the Soviet government?

A. Certainly they will say that. They have been saying it for some time now. What else can they say to justify their base persecutions of the Bolshevik-Leninists? But we are guided not by the calumny of opponents but by the actual course of the class struggle. The October Revolution, with the Bolshevik Party at its head, created the workers' state. Now the Bolshevik Party no longer exists. But the fundamental social content of the October Revolution is still alive. The bureaucratic dictatorship, notwithstanding the technical successes achieved under it (against itself), greatly facilitates the possibility of the capitalist restoration, but luckily the point of a restoration has not yet been reached. With favorable internal and, above all, international conditions, the edifice of the workers' state can be regenerated on the social foundations of the Soviet Union without a new revolution. For a long time we had calculated that we would succeed in reforming the CPSU itself, and through its mediation, in regenerating the Soviet regime. But the present official party now bears much less resemblance to a party than two years ago or even a year ago. The party congress has not taken place for more than three years, and nobody talks about it. The Stalinist clique is now whittling down and reconstructing its "party," as if it were a disciplinary battalion. The purges and expulsions were at first intended to disorganize the party, to terrorize it to deprive it of the possibility of thinking and acting; now the repressions are aimed at preventing the reorganization of the party. Yet the proletarian party is indispensable if the Soviet state is not to perish. There are many elements in favor of it but only in a struggle against the Stalinist bureaucracy can they be brought to the surface and united. To speak now of the "reform" of the CPSU would mean to look backward and not forward, to soothe one's mind with empty formulas. In the USSR, it is necessary to build a Bolshevik party again. B. But isn't that the road of civil war?

A. The Stalinist bureaucracy ordered a civil war against the Left Opposition even in the period when we stood quite sincerely and with conviction for the reform of the CPSU. Arrests, deportations, executions -- what are these if not civil war, at least in embryo? In the struggle against the Left Opposition, the Stalinist bureaucracy constituted an instrument of the counterrevolutionary forces, and thus it isolated itself from the masses. Now civil war is placed on the order of the day along another line: between the counterrevolution on the offensive and the Stalinist bureaucracy on the defensive. In the struggle with the counterrevolution, the Bolshevik-Leninists will obviously be the left flank of the Soviet front. A fighting bloc in coalition with the Stalinists will result here from the whole situation. It should not, however, be thought that in this struggle the Stalinist bureaucracy will be unanimous. At the decisive moment, it will break up into fragments and its component elements will meet again in the two opposing camps.

B. So civil war is inevitable?

A. It is going on right now. By keeping to the present course, it can only become more acute. With the further impotence of the Comintern, with the paralysis of the international proletarian vanguard, and, under those conditions, with the inevitable growth of world fascism, the victory of the counterrevolution

in the USSR would be inevitable. Naturally, the Bolshevik- Leninists will continue their work in the USSR regardless of the conditions. But the workers' state can be saved only by the intervention of the world revolutionary movement. In all of human history, the objective conditions for this regeneration and redevelopment have never been so favorable as now. What is lacking is the revolutionary party. The Stalinist clique can rule only by destroying the party, in the USSR as in the rest of the world. Escape from this vicious circle is possible only by breaking with the Stalinist bureaucracy. It is necessary to build a party in a fresh place, under a clean banner.

B. And how will the revolutionary parties of the capitalist world be able to act upon the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR?

A. The whole question is one of real strength. We have seen how the Stalinist bureaucracy crawled before the Kuomintang, before the British trade unions. We see how it is crawling now, even before the petty-bourgeois pacifists. Strong revolutionary parties, truly capable of fighting against imperialism, and consequently of defending the USSR, will compel the Stalinist bureaucracy to reckon with them. Much more important is the fact that these organizations will acquire an enormous authority in the eyes of the Soviet workers and will thus finally create favorable conditions for the rebirth of a genuine Bolshevik party. It is only on this road that the reform of the Soviet state is possible without a new proletarian revolution.

B. So then: we abandon the slogan of the reform of the CPSU and we build up the new party as the instrument for the reform of the Soviet Union.

A. Perfectly correct.

B. Is our strength equal to such a grandiose task?

A. The question is put incorrectly. It is necessary first to formulate the historical problem clearly and courageously, and then to assemble the forces to solve it. Certainly we are still weak today. But that does not at all mean that history will grant us a delay. One of the psychological springs of opportunism is fear of great tasks, that is, the mistrust of revolutionary possibilities. However, great tasks do not fan from the sky; they emerge from the course of the class struggle. It is in just these very conditions that we must seek the forces for the resolution of the great tasks.

B. But doesn't the overestimation of one's own forces often lead to adventurism?

A. True. It would be pure adventurism if we were to "proclaim" that our present organization is the Communist International or if, under this name, we were to unite mechanically with the various other opposition organizations. It is impossible to "proclaim" a new International: the perspective as yet is still to build it But one can and should, from today on, proclaim the necessity of creating a new International.

Ferdinand Lassalle, who was no stranger to opportunism or adventurism, nevertheless expressed perfectly well the fundamental requirement of revolutionary politics: "Every great action begins with the statement of what is." Before replying to concrete questions about this -- how a new International is to be built what methods are to be applied, what dates are to be fixed -- it is necessary to assert openly what is: The Comintern is dead for the revolution.

B. On this point, in your opinion, there can no longer be any doubts?

A. Not a shadow. The whole course of the struggle against National Socialism, the outcome of that

struggle, and the lessons of this outcome indicate equally not only the complete revolutionary bankruptcy of the Comintern, but also its organic incapacity to learn, to mend its ways, that is, "to reform itself" The German lesson would not be so irrefutable and so crushing were it not the crowning piece in a ten-year history of centrist blundering, of pernicious errors, of ever more horrifying defeats, of increasingly fruitless sacrifices and losses, and -- side by side with that -- complete theoretical devastation; bureaucratic degeneration; parroting; demoralization; duping the masses; uninterrupted falsifications; banishment of revolutionists; and the selection of functionaries, mercenaries, and pure lackeys. The present Comintern is an expensive apparatus for weakening the proletarian vanguard. That is all! It is not capable of doing more.

Wherever the conditions of bourgeois democracy open up a certain elbow-room, the Stalinists, thanks to their apparatus and treasury, simulate political activity. Muenzenberg has now become a symbolical figure of the Comintern. And who is Muenzenberg? He is an Oustric on the "proletarian" arena. Empty noncommittal slogans; a little bit of Bolshevism; a little bit of liberalism; a journalistic cattle auction; literary salons where friendship for the USSR has its price; theatrical hostility towards the reformists, changing easily into friendship for them (Barbusse); and mainly, plenty of cash, independent of the working masses -- that is what Muenzenberg is. Living politically off the favors of the bourgeois democracy, the Stalinists yet demand of them, to top it all off, that they strike down the Bolshevik-Leninists. Can one sink lower?... Yet as soon as the bourgeoisie seriously lifts the fascist or simply the police fist Stalinism puts its tail between its legs and obediently retires into the void. The Comintern in agony can give nothing to the world proletariat absolutely nothing, except evil.

B. It is impossible not to acknowledge that the Comintern, as a central apparatus, has become a brake on the revolutionary movement, just as it must be agreed that reform of the apparatus, independent of the masses, is utterly unrealizable. But what about the national sections? Are all of them in the same stage of degeneration and decadence?

A. After the German catastrophe, we saw how the Stalinist parties were liquidated without mass resistance in Austria as well as in Bulgaria. If the situation is more favorable in some countries than in others, the difference, despite everything, is not very great. But let us even assume that one section of the Comintern or another is found to be conquered by the Left Opposition: the morning after this, if not the night before, it will be expelled from the Comintern and it will have to seek a new International for itself (something like that did happen in Chile). Cases of that sort also took place during the rise of the Third International: thus, the French Socialist Party transformed itself officially into the Communist Party. But that did not change the general direction of our policy towards the Second International.

B. Don't you think that thousands of "Stalinists" sympathetic to us will recoil in fright when they learn that we are breaking finally with the Comintern?

A. It is possible. It is even entirely likely. But all the more decisively will they join with us at the next stage- It must not be forgotten, on the other hand, that in every country there are thousands of revolutionists who have abandoned the official party or been expelled from it, who did not join us chiefly because to them we were only a faction of that same party with which they were disgusted. An even greater number of workers are breaking right now from reformism and seeking revolutionary leadership. Finally, amid the putrefaction of the Social Democracy and the wreck of Stalinism, a young generation of workers that needs a stainless banner is rising. The Bolshevik-Leninists can and should form the kernel around which all these numerous elements may crystallize. Then everything alive in the Stalinist

"International" will shake off its last doubts and join us.

B. Are you not afraid that the new orientation will meet with opposition within our own ranks?

A. At first it is absolutely inevitable. In many countries all the work of the Left Opposition is chiefly, if not exclusively, bound up with the official party. It has penetrated very little into the trade unions and has been almost totally uninterested in what is happening inside the Social Democracy. It is high time to put an end to narrow propagandism! It is necessary for each member of our organization to think over the problem thoroughly. The events will help: every day will bring irrefutable arguments on the necessity of a new International. I do not doubt that carrying out the turn simultaneously and decisively will open up before us a broad historical perspective.

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Leon Trotsky

BONAPARTISM, FASCISM, AND WAR

by

Leon Trotsky

August 20 1940

Unfinished article at Trotsky's death on August 20 1940

Bulletin of the Opposition, no. 84, August-October 1940

Bulletin editors inserted a few interpolations, in brackets, to complete sentences and provide transitions where these were missing in the original manuscript. The order in which the paragraphs appear in the Bulletin is at variance with the English version, since the order of sections of the manuscript was not marked by Trotsky. An English translation by John G. Wright without the Bulletin interpolations, was printed in Fourth International, October 1940.

In his very pretentious, very muddled and stupid article ["National Defense: The Case for Socialism," Partisan Review, July-August, 1940.-Editor.] Dwight Macdonald tries to represent us as holding the view that fascism is simply a repetition of Bonapartism. A greater piece of nonsense would be hard to invent. We have analyzed fascism as it developed, throughout the various stages of its development and advanced to the forefront now one, now another of its aspects. There is an element of Bonapartism in fascism. Without this element namely, without the raising of state power above society owing to an extreme sharpening of the class struggle, fascism would have been impossible. But the class struggle, fascism would have been impossible. But we pointed out from the very beginning that it was primarily a question of Bonapartism of the epoch of imperialist decline, which is qualitatively different from Bonapartism of the epoch of bourgeois rise. At the next stage we distinguished pure Bonapartism as the prologue to a fascist regime. Because in the case of pure Bonapartism the rule of a monarch is approximated. [The editors of the Bulletin of the Opposition added a few interpolations, shown here in brackets, to complete sentences and to make the transition from one point to another, where Trotsky's dictaphone recording, and hence the manuscript, was incomplete. It should be kept in mind that these interpolations are not by Trotsky, but by the editorial board of the Bulletin of the Opposition. -Editor.]

In postwar Italy the situation was profoundly revolutionary. The proletariat had every opportunity [to take power]. [The bourgeoisie at first hoped to stave off the dictatorship by means of a Bonapartist regime with Giolitti at the head. But this regime proved unstable and gave way to the fascist forces, recruited from the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie.] [It was the same with] the ministries of Brüning, Schleicher, and the presidency of Hindenburg in Germany, Pétain's government in France, [2] but they all have proved, or must prove, unstable. In the epoch of imperialist decline a pure Bonapartist Bonapartism is completely inadequate; imperialism finds it indispensable to mobilize the petty bourgeoisie and to crush the proletariat under its weight. Imperialism is capable of fulfilling this task only in case the proletariat itself reveals its inability to conquer power, while the social crisis drives the petty bourgeoisie into a condition of paroxysm.

The sharpness of the social crisis arises from this, that with today's concentration of the means of production, i.e., the monopoly of trusts, the law of value-the market is already incapable of regulating economic relations. State intervention becomes an absolute necessity. (Inasmuch as the proletariat --) [This intervention will not solve the problems of the proletariat if the proletariat doesn't seize power and institute socialist methods of regulating the economy.]

The present war, as we have stated on more than one occasion, is a continuation of the last war. But a continuation does not signify a repetition. As a general rule, a continuation signifies a development a deepening, a sharpening. Our policy, the policy of the revolutionary proletariat toward the second imperialist war, is a continuation of the policy elaborated during the last imperialist war, primarily under Lenin's leadership. But a continuation does not signify a repetition. In this case too, continuation signifies a development a deepening and a sharpening.

During the last war not only the proletariat as a whole but also its vanguard and, in a certain sense, the vanguard of this vanguard, was caught unawares. The elaboration of the principles of revolutionary policy toward the war began at a time when the war was already in full blaze and the military machine exercised unlimited rule. One year after the outbreak of the war, the small revolutionary minority was still compelled to accommodate itself to a centrist majority at the Zimmerwald Conference. [3] Prior to the February Revolution and even afterwards, the revolutionary elements felt themselves to be not contenders for power but the extreme left opposition. Even Lenin relegated the socialist revolution to a more or less distant future. [In 1915 or 1916] he wrote in Switzerland:

[The English translator here added the following: "Several citations from Lenin during that period fit Trotsky's description. We quote two: "It is possible, however, that five, ten and even more years will pass before the beginning of the socialist revolution." (From an article written in March, 1916, Lenin's Collected Works, vol. XIX, p. 45, Third Russian Edition.) "We, the older men, will perhaps not live long enough to see the decisive battles of the impending revolution." (Report on 1905 Revolution delivered to Swiss students, January, 1917, idem, page 357.)"]

If that is how Lenin viewed the situation, then there is hardly any need of talking about the others.

This political position of the extreme left wing expressed itself most graphically on the question of the defense of the fatherland. In 1915 Lenin referred in his writings to revolutionary wars which the victorious proletariat would have to wage. But it was a question of an indefinite historical perspective and not of tomorrow's task. The attention of the revolutionary wing was centered on the question of the defense of the capitalist fatherland. The revolutionists naturally replied to this question in the negative. This was entirely correct. This purely negative answer served as the basis for propaganda and for training the cadres, but it could not win the masses who did not want a foreign conqueror. In Russia prior to the war the Bolsheviks constituted four-fifths of the proletarian vanguard, that is, of the workers participating in political life (newspapers, elections, etc.). Following the February Revolution the unlimited rule passed into the hands of defensists, the Mensheviks and the SRs. True enough, the Bolsheviks in the space of eight months conquered the overwhelming majority of the workers. But the decisive role in this conquest was not played by the refusal to defend the bourgeois fatherland but by the slogan: "All Power to the Soviets!" And only by this revolutionary slogan! The criticism of imperialism, its militarism, the renunciation of the defense of bourgeois democracy and so on never could have won the overwhelming majority of the people to the side of the Bolsheviks. In all other belligerent countries, with the exception of Russia, the revolutionary wing toward the end of the war all [still put forward only negative slogans].

Insofar as the proletariat proves incapable at a given stage of conquering power, imperialism begins regulating economic life with its own methods; the political mechanism is the fascist party, which becomes the state power. The productive forces are in irreconcilable contradiction not only with private property but also with national boundaries. Imperialism is the very expression of this contradiction. Imperialist capitalism seeks to solve this contradiction through an extension of boundaries, seizure of

new territories, and so on. The totalitarian state, subjecting all aspects of economic, political, and cultural life to finance capital, is the instrument for creating a supranationalist state, an Imperialist empire, ruling over continents, ruling over the whole world.

All these traits of fascism we have analyzed each one by itself and all of them in their totality to the extent that they became manifest or came to the forefront

Both theoretical analysis and the rich historical experience of the last quarter of a century have demonstrated with equal force that fascism is each time the final link of a specific political cycle composed of the following: the gravest crisis of capitalist society; the growth of the radicalization of the working class; the growth of sympathy toward the working class and a yearning for change on the part of the rural and urban petty bourgeoisie; the extreme confusion of the big bourgeoisie; its cowardly and treacherous maneuvers aimed at avoiding the revolutionary climax; the exhaustion of the proletariat; growing confusion and indifference; the aggravation of the social crisis; the despair of the petty bourgeoisie, its yearning for change; the collective neurosis of the petty bourgeoisie, its readiness to believe in miracles, its readiness for violent measures; the growth of hostility towards the proletariat which has deceived its expectations. These are the premises for a swift formation of a fascist party and its victory.

It is quite self-evident that the radicalization of the working class in the United States has passed only through its initial phases, almost exclusively in the sphere of the trade-union movement (the CIO). The prewar period, and then the war itself may temporarily interrupt this process of radicalization, especially if a considerable number of workers are absorbed into war industry. But this interruption of the process of radicalization cannot be of long duration. The second stage of radicalization will assume a more sharply expressive character. The problem of forming an independent labor party will be put on the order of the day. Our transitional demands will gain great popularity. On the other hand, the fascist, reactionary tendencies will withdraw to the background, assuming a defensive position, awaiting a more favorable moment. This is the closest perspective. No occupation is more completely unworthy than that of speculating whether or not we shall succeed in creating a powerful revolutionary vanguard party. Ahead lies a favorable perspective, providing all the justification for revolutionary activism. It is necessary to utilize the opportunities which are opening up and to build the revolutionary party.

The Second World War poses the question of change of regimes more imperiously, more urgently than did the first war. It is first and foremost a question of the political regime. The workers are aware that democracy is suffering shipwreck everywhere, and that they are threatened by fascism even in those countries where fascism is as yet nonexistent. The bourgeoisie of the democratic countries will naturally utilize this dread of fascism on the part of the workers; but, on the other hand, the bankruptcy of democracies, their collapse, their painless transformation into reactionary dictatorships compel the workers to pose before themselves the problem of power and render them responsive to the posing of the problem of power.

Reaction wields today such power as perhaps never before in the modern history of mankind. But it would be an inexcusable blunder to see only reaction. The historical process is a contradictory one. Under the cover of official reaction, profound processes are taking place among the masses, who are accumulating experience and becoming receptive to new political perspectives. The old conservative tradition of the democratic state, which was so powerful even during the era of the last imperialist war, exists today only as an extremely unstable survival. On the eve of the last war the European workers had

numerically powerful parties. But on the order of the day were put reforms, partial conquests, and not at all the conquest of power.

The American working class is still without a mass labor party even today. But the objective situation and the experience accumulated by the American workers can within a very brief period of time place on the order of the day the question of the conquest of power. This perspective must be made the basis of our agitation. It is not merely a question of a position on capitalist militarism and of renouncing the defense of the bourgeois state but of directly preparing for the conquest of power and the defense of the proletarian fatherland.

May not the Stalinists turn out at the head of a new revolutionary upsurge and may they not ruin the revolution as they did in Spain and previously in China? It is of course impermissible to consider that such a possibility is excluded, for example, in France. The first wave of the revolution has often, or more correctly, always carried to the top those "left" parties which have not managed to discredit themselves completely in the preceding period and which have an imposing political tradition behind them. Thus the February Revolution raised up the Mensheviks and SRs who were the opponents of the revolution on its very eve. Thus the German revolution in November 1918 raised to power the Social Democrats, who were the irreconcilable opponents of revolutionary uprisings.

Twelve years ago Trotsky wrote in an article published by The New Republic:

"There is no epoch in human history so saturated with antagonisms as ours. Under too high a tension of class and international animosities, the 'fuses' of democracy 'blow out.' Hence the short-circuits of dictatorship. Naturally the weakest 'interrupters' are the first to give way. But the force of internal and world controversies does not weaken: it grows. It is doubtful if it is destined to calm down, given that the process has so far only taken hold of the periphery of the capitalist world. Gout begins in the little finger of a hand or in the big toe, but once on the way it goes right to the heart ("Which Way Russia?" The New Republic, May 22, 1929).

This was written at a time when the entire bourgeois democracy in each country believed that fascism was possible only in the backward countries which had not yet graduated from the school of democracy. The editorial board of The New Republic, which at that period had not yet been touched with the blessings of the GPU, accompanied Trotsky's article with one of its own. The article is so characteristic of the average American philistine that we shall quote from it the most interesting passages.

"In view of his personal misfortunes, the exiled Russian leader shows a remarkable power of detached analysis; but his detachment is that of the rigid Marxian, and seems to us to lack a realistic view of history -- the very thing on which he prides himself. His notion that democracy is a fair-weather form of government incapable of withstanding the storms of international or domestic controversy, can be supported (as he himself half admits) only by taking for your examples countries where democracy has never made more than the feeblest beginnings, and countries, moreover, in which the industrial revolution has hardly more than started."

Further on, the editorial board of The New Republic dismisses the instance of Kerensky's democracy in Soviet Russia and why it failed to withstand the test of class contradictions and gave way to a revolutionary perspective. The periodical sagely writes:

"Kerensky's weakness was an historic accident, which Trotsky cannot admit because there is no room in his mechanistic scheme for any such thing."

Just like Dwight Macdonald, The New Republic accused the Marxists of being unable to understand history realistically owing to their orthodox or mechanistic approach to political events. The New Republic was of the opinion that fascism is the product of the backwardness of capitalism and not its overripeness. In the opinion of that periodical which, I repeat, was the opinion of the overwhelming majority of average democratic philistines, fascism is the lot of backward bourgeois countries. The sage editorial board did not even take the trouble of thinking about the question of why it was the universal conviction in the nineteenth century that backward countries must develop along the road of democracy. In any case, in the old capitalist countries, democracy came into its rights at a time when the level of their economic development was not above but below the economic development of modern Italy. And what is more, in that era democracy represented the main highway of historical development which was entered by all countries one by one, the backward ones following the more advanced and sometimes ahead of them. Our era on the contrary is the era of democracy's collapse, and, moreover, the collapse begins with the weaker links but gradually extends to those which appeared strong and impregnable. Thus the orthodox or mechanistic, that is, the Marxist approach to events enabled us to forecast the course of developments many years in advance. On the contrary, the realistic approach of The New Republic was the approach of a blind kitten. The New Republic followed up its critical attitude toward Marxism by failing under the influence of the most revolting caricature of Marxism, namely, Stalinism.

Most of the philistines of the newest crop base their attacks on Marxism on the fact that, contrary to Marx's prognosis, fascism came instead of socialism. Nothing is more stupid and vulgar than this criticism. Marx demonstrated and proved that when capitalism reaches a certain level, the only way out for society lies in the socialization of the means of production, i.e., socialism. He also demonstrated that in view of the class structure of society, the proletariat alone is capable of solving this task in an irreconcilable revolutionary struggle against the bourgeoisie. He further demonstrated that for the fulfillment of this task the proletariat needs a revolutionary party. All his life Marx, and together with him and after him Engels, and after them Lenin, waged an irreconcilable struggle against those traits in proletarian parties, socialist parties, which obstructed the solution of the revolutionary historical task. The irreconcilability of the struggle waged by Marx, Engels, and Lenin against opportunism on the one side and anarchism on the other demonstrates that they did not at all underestimate this danger. In what did it consist? In this, that the opportunism of the summits of the working class, subject to the bourgeoisie's influence, could obstruct, slow down, make more difficult postpone the fulfillment of the revolutionary task of the proletariat. It is precisely this condition of society that we are now observing. Fascism did not at all come "instead" of socialism. Fascism is the continuation of capitalism, an attempt to perpetuate its existence by means of the most bestial and monstrous measures. Capitalism obtained an opportunity to resort to fascism only because the proletariat did not accomplish the socialist revolution in time. The proletariat was paralyzed in the fulfillment of its task by the opportunist parties. The only thing that can be said is that there turned out to be more obstacles, more difficulties, more stages on the road of the revolutionary development of the proletariat than was foreseen by the founders of scientific socialism. Fascism and the series of imperialist wars constitute the terrible school in which the proletariat has to free itself of petty-bourgeois traditions and superstitions; has to rid itself of opportunist democratic, and adventurist parties; has to hammer out and train the revolutionary vanguard and in this way prepare for the solving of the task apart from which there is not and cannot be any salvation for the development of mankind.

Eastman, [4] if you please, has come to the conclusion that the concentration of the means of production in the hands of the state endangers his "freedom" and he has therefore decided to renounce socialism.

This anecdote deserves being included in the text of a history of ideology. The socialization of the means of production is the only solution to the economic problem at the given stage of mankind's development. Delay in solving this problem leads to the barbarism of fascism. All the intermediate solutions, undertaken by the bourgeoisie with the help of the petty bourgeoisie, have undergone miserable and shameful ruin. All this is absolutely uninteresting to Eastman. He noticed that his "freedom" (freedom of muddling, freedom of indifferentism, freedom of passivity, freedom of literary dilettantism) was being threatened from various sides, and he decided immediately to apply his own measure: renounce socialism. Astonishingly enough this decision exercised no influence either on Wall Street or on the policy of the trade unions. Life went its own way just as if Max Eastman had remained a socialist. It may be set down as a general rule that the more impotent is a petty-bourgeois radical, especially in the United States, the more (firmly he clings to his freedom].

In France there is no fascism in the real sense of the term. The regime of the senile Marshal Pétain represents a senile form of Bonapartism of the epoch of imperialist decline. But this regime too proved possible only after the prolonged radicalization of the French working class, which led to the explosion of June 1936, had failed to find a revolutionary way out. The Second and Third Internationals, the reactionary charlatanism of the "People's Fronts" [5] deceived and demoralized the working class. After five years of propaganda in favor of an alliance of democracies and of collective security, after Stalin's sudden passage into Hitler's camp, the French working class was caught unawares. The war provoked a terrible disorientation and a mood of passive defeatism, or, to put it more correctly, the indifferentism of an impasse. From this web of circumstances arose first the unprecedented military catastrophe and then the despicable Pétain regime.

Precisely because Pétain's regime is senile Bonapartism, it contains no element of stability and can be overthrown by a revolutionary mass uprising much sooner than a fascist regime.

In every discussion of political topics the question invariably flares up: shall we succeed in creating a strong party for the moment when the crisis comes? Might not fascism anticipate us? Isn't a fascist stage of development inevitable? The successes of fascism easily make people lose all perspective, lead them to forget the actual conditions which made the strengthening and the victory of fascism possible. Yet a clear understanding of these conditions is of especial importance to the workers of the United States. We may set it down as an historical law: fascism was able to conquer only in those countries where the conservative labor parties prevented the proletariat from utilizing the revolutionary situation and seizing power. In Germany, two revolutionary situations were involved: 1918-1919 and 1923-24. Even in 1929 a direct struggle for power on the part of the proletariat was still possible. In all these three cases the Social Democracy and the Comintern criminally and viciously disrupted the conquest of power and thereby placed society in an impasse. Only under these conditions and in this situation did the stormy rise of fascism and its gaining of power prove possible.

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